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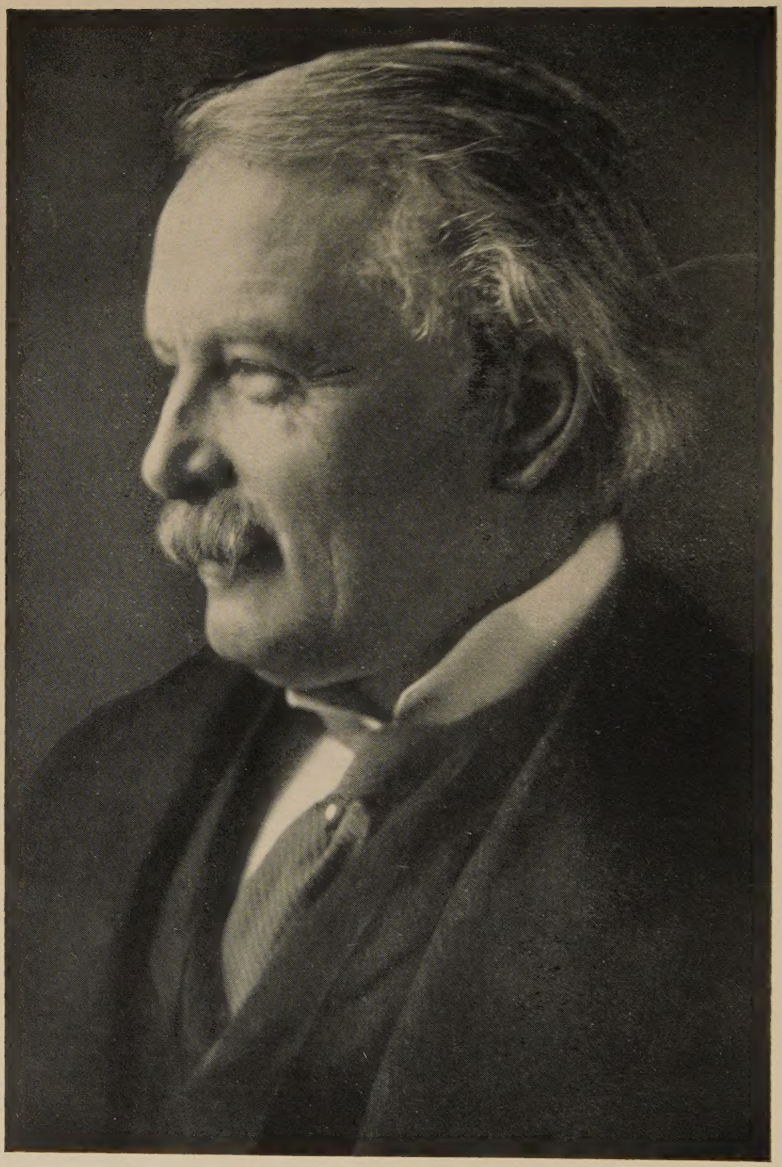

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE:
AT THE TIME OF HIS ACCESSION TO THE PREMIERSHIP

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

1863-1945

The Man and the Statesman

By

J. HUGH EDWARDS

With an Introduction by

THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN

VOLUME II

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DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

VOLUME TWO

XIX

BEGINNING OF THE GREAT WAR

CHAPTER XIX

BEGINNING OF THE GREAT WAR

"SHALL a man arise from the ranks of the people, as did Abraham Lincoln from the backwoods of America—a man with real oratorical power and with commanding genius?" declared the late Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, in the Rede Lecture which he delivered before the University of Cambridge in the year 1913. "I can see no reason," he proceeded to say, "why he should not renew in England the glories of a Chatham or a Grettan. His triumphs might be less in the senate than in the arena; his style might not be that of the classics of the past. But he might by reason of his gifts climb to the topmost place where he could sway the destinies of the Estate and affect the fortunes of an Empire. Symptoms of such a power and style," he added in a deliberate tone, "are sometimes visible in the declamations of Mr. Lloyd George." Uttered, at a time, when political partisanship was running high and when the speaker was divided from Mr. Lloyd George by the sharpest of political differences, so unbiassed a tribute was manifestly invested with a striking significance. In the light of subsequent events, it is seen to have been begotten of prophetic insight, for the following year marked both the occasion and the process of its justification.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

It has long been an accepted axiom that destiny is conditioned by circumstances. It is not great men that make their age—it is the age that makes great men. Embryonic genius needs a stimulating environment for its full fruition. There was something more than a touch of poetic imaginativeness in Gray's "Elegy," as he wistfully surveyed the little country churchyard, with its soil laden with the dust of "mute inglorious Miltons" and of "Village Hampdens." For the lack of the spur of circumstance, there have been poets that have never found the needful inspiration for the expression of the muse within them, and there have been potential leaders who have never found their way into the arena.

But, the converse, also, as has been abundantly demonstrated, holds good. Time and again there have been men who attained to the full measure of their inbred possibilities only as the result of some drastic demand upon their latent resourcefulness. For example, it is very manifest that Oliver Cromwell would have been content to live out his days as a yeoman farmer, amid the ferns of Huntingdon, had not King Charles precipitated a constitutional rupture with his Parliament. It is incontrovertible that, had the rebellion of the southern area in the United States of America not broken out at the time and in the manner in which it did, Abraham Lincoln could not have set so conspicuous and indelible an impress of his statesmanship on the pages of History.

And in like manner it may be questioned whether David Lloyd George would have attained to his full stature in statesmanship had not the grim catas-

trophe of the Great War cut athwart both the groove and the bias of his life and diverted his course into a new and totally unforeseen direction. It is quite true that the remarkable romance of his earlier career, with its meteoric progress from the obscurity of a sequestered hamlet among the Welsh hills to a commanding place in the front rank of British statesmen, was in itself an unmistakable earnest of still greater achievements. His inbred genius for state-craft, manifested, as it had been, by an unbroken series of triumphs in his capacity as one of the most responsible Ministers of State, obviously predicted his inevitable accession to the leading place in the service of the Crown. Still the reflection remains that, even so, he would not have attained, as he did during the grim days of the War, to that dazzling height of a world-wide prestige and power, with its imperious exercise of an unchallengeable authority as one of the prime arbiters of the fate of Europe, but for the outbreak of the devastating conflict. It was the coming of the Great War that provided the touchstone of his destiny and that subsequently led him to the most commanding place among the seats of the mighty in the councils of Europe.

It is this consideration that gives piquancy to the reflection that he all but missed the path which Destiny had thus marked for him, for when the first rumbling sound of the on-coming conflict was heard on this side of the North Sea, like the noise of distant thunder, he was conspicuous among those members of the British Cabinet who could not bring themselves to see that Britain was required, either by the dictates

of policy or by the considerations of national honour, to unsheath her sword for the fray.

He had long regarded war as both a crime and a blunder—a crime against civilisation and a blunder in state-craft. "I hate and abhor all war," he had exclaimed in justification of his persistent opposition to the Boer War, and his ingrained antipathy had become still more intensified with the succeeding years. When the menacing shadows of the conflict were projecting themselves across Europe in the latter days of July, 1914, he was engrossed in his cherished task of ameliorating the social conditions of the great mass of the manual workers throughout Great Britain. He had already succeeded in placing upon the Statute Book of the realm a comprehensive measure for ensuring for them the substantial benefits of insurance against sickness and unemployment, and he was preparing to follow up that achievement with a great political campaign for the purpose of shattering the feudal tenure on which the land of the community was being held to the profit of the few and to the manifest loss of the many. Five years earlier he had warned the Liberals of the danger of scare-mongering, in the revival of the prediction of an inevitable war with Germany, which would be designedly exploited for the purposes of "rushing the Government into the criminal extravagance of unnecessary armaments on land and sea." He openly scouted the idea of "a German peril" which he scornfully stigmatised as "a mere bogey" which had been fitted up for mere electioneering purposes.

Instinctively as he abhorred war as an anachronism in a civilised state, he dreaded it still more as the

ruthless dissolvent of everything in the way of solid reform. "Is there any period in the history of England or of any other country," he had enquired in the most challenging of tones, in the same course of a speech which he delivered in the early days of the South African War, "when reforms were carried out in the time of war? The history of every country proves the contrary," he had exclaimed in a ready and emphatic reply to his own enquiry.

Indeed, so bent was he upon his task of pressing forward with his schemes for the social amelioration of the masses that he was quite unperturbed by the unconcealed action of Germany in increasing her armaments, on land and on sea, on the widest possible scale. Sinister in their significance as were such preparations in the eyes of onlookers like Lord Roberts, they appeared to him to be capable of a simple explanation. "Here is Germany in the middle of Europe with France and Russia on either side," he declared in the course of a speech in which he openly scorned the suggestion of a German peril, "and with a combination of armies greater than hers. Suppose we had a possible combination on, which would lay us open to invasion—suppose that Germany and France, or Germany and Austria had fleets which, in combination, would be stronger than ours! Would we not be frightened or would we not build? Would we not arm? Of course, we should. I want our friends who think that because Germany is a little frightened she really means mischief to us, to remember that she is frightened for a reason which would frighten us under the same circumstances."

In the light of subsequent events, when Germany, in the arrogant consciousness of her superiority in armaments, wantonly shattered the peace of Europe, one cannot but marvel at the unruffled complacency with which he had regarded her naval preparations. It is, however, but just to point out that such complacency was begotten of an insufficient knowledge of what was happening behind closed doors at the leading Chancellaries of Europe. In a speech which he made some three months after the outbreak of the War, he declared that, up to the eve of the crash, there was not a man in the Cabinet who had thought that war with Germany was even a possibility under the conditions that then existed. The declaration may not have been strictly accurate, for, while it justly represented the position of the majority of the members of the Cabinet, it took no cognisance of the small but commanding section which, with its further knowledge of the European situation, had a correspondingly clearer discernment of the sinister significance of the clouds on the horizon of the North Sea. This division in the Cabinet, though it was more often felt than expressed, had had its reflex influence upon the foreign policy of the British Government, for, as Mr. Winston Churchill afterwards confessed, "duality and discordance" had been for nearly ten years the key-note of British politics, and those whose duty it was to watch over the safety of the country lived simultaneously in two different worlds of thought. In his succinct and brilliant survey of the political situation in this country, prior to the outbreak of the War, Mr. W. F. Roch points out that the Liberal

Cabinet was composed of two separate strata, each following the trend of past differences, created by the South African War, when the Liberal Party became divided into two opposing sections, and each of them, notwithstanding the apparent reunion of the severed sections which the formation of a Liberal Ministry had ensured, still somewhat distrustful of the other—"the upper stratum, visible, void, visionary, in which Mr. Lloyd George soon became the central figure, dreaming dreams of Hague Conferences, disarmament, solid reform and universal arbitration; the lower stratum, invisible, silent, dealing with realities of which the upper stratum was only dimly aware." With such a cleavage of opinion in the Cabinet, Lloyd George's serene optimism in the face of Germany's feverish efforts to increase her naval strength becomes intelligible. He had not at the time been taken into the confidence of that inner ring in the Cabinet whose official responsibilities had brought them face to face with the sinister spectre in the European situation and consequently he was not even dimly aware of what Mr. Churchill has described as "a world beneath the threshold—a world of monstrous shadows, moving in convulsive combinations through vistas of fathomless catastrophes."

Strange as it may seem, the fact remains that it was not until the sudden emergence of the Agadir crisis in 1911 that Lloyd George first learnt that, in pursuance of the fundamental purpose that had begotten the Entente Cordiale with France, which the Conservative Cabinet had established in 1904, under cover of a signed agreement, in removal of

"the last causes of friction" between the two countries in regard to their respective interests in Egypt and Morocco, the inner circle of the Liberal Cabinet had, immediately upon their accession to power, sanctioned frequent consultations between the French and the British naval and military experts. The primary purpose of these consultations was, in the words of Mr. Asquith, who was one of the quartette of British ministers who had secret knowledge of their existence, "to compare notes, and to consider beforehand the possibilities which might arise in the event of a breach of the peace." Although the secret conversations had not, as Lord Haldane in later years pointed out, the force of military conventions or the sanctions of a diplomatic pact, their initiation was, as Mr. Churchill has justly claimed, a "step of profound significance and of far-reaching reactions," for, as he has observed, "however explicitly the two governments might agree and affirm to each other that no national or political engagement was involved in these technical discussions, the fact remained that they constituted an exceedingly potent tie."

Had Lloyd George been taken earlier into the confidence of the inner ring, it may be fairly urged that, with a clearer conception of the grim realities of the European situation, he would have displayed a far less complacent attitude in the face of Germany's unconcealed efforts in amassing armaments. Such a surmise is justified by one or two incidents. For instance, the late Harold Spender, in some reminiscences of a visit which he made with Lloyd George to Germany in the year 1908, revealed how

one evening when they were sitting in the Organerie at Stuttgart, their conversation turned on the possibilities of a war between Britain and Germany. According to Mr. Spender, the suggestion instantly evoked from Lloyd George the parallel of Rome and Carthage. "There is the same commercial rivalry," he proceeded to point out, "the same sea of jealousy, the same abiding quality between soldier and the merchant, the warrior and the shopkeeper, the civilisation that has arrived and the civilisation that is still struggling to arrive," and then after a pause, he added in the tone and mood of a soliloquy: "I wonder if we shall be as unprepared as Carthage." The significance of this conversation, with its intuitive interpretation of the menace of the situation, found its fitting counterpart in the resolute attitude which he had displayed at the time of the Agadir crisis when, with a deliberate gravity of both phrase and tone, he had warned the German Government that Britain was not prepared to buy peace at the price of material humiliation. That declaration of his, as Mr. Churchill has justly recorded, "proved a thunderclap to the German Government." It may be urged that the premonition of a lurking peril which stirred Lloyd George's uneasiness at the Stuttgart Organerie in 1908 and even his stern-toned declaration at the Mansion House in 1911, represented nothing more than transient moods on his part, and that they left untouched his basic attitude in regard to Germany. Still, they had their manifest value—as affording clear proof that, when he did detect any sign of wanton aggressiveness on

the part of Germany, he was found ready to counter it with the necessary resistance. It is, however, indisputable that, with the passing of the Agadir crisis and a consequent improvement in the relations between the German and British Governments—as clearly demonstrated by their actual co-operation, in the two ensuing years, in the task of circumscribing both the area and the scope of the Balkan War—Lloyd George had become quite convinced that any possibility of a war with Germany had passed away. Indeed he publicly welcomed so manifest a change in the relationship of the two countries as the omen of a new era. "This is the most favourable moment," he declared, in an interview which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* on the opening day of the fateful year of 1914, "that has presented itself within the last twenty years to overhaul our expenditure in armaments." He based this optimistic survey of the international situation on the ground that the relations between Britain and Germany were "infinitely more friendly," than they had been for years. Both countries, he pointed out, had realised what ought to have been obvious long before, "and that is," he added, "they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by a quarrel, and that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by reverting to the old policy of friendliness."

The Budget which he submitted to the House of Commons early in May in the same year—1914—reflected the buoyancy of his belief that, with the relaxation of the former tension between Britain and Germany, the pressure for armaments would be considerably lessened.

It may be noted that he was not alone in his optimistic anticipation that any danger of a rupture with Germany had passed away. There was not one of his colleagues in the Cabinet who did not show his optimism at that period. Mr. Harcourt, in a speech to his constituents, had confessed that he "could conceive no circumstances in which Continental operations would not be a crime," while the Lord Chancellor[1] had committed himself to the dogmatic assertion that "time would show that the Germans had no aggressive intentions," and that "the foolish people will cease to talk of a war between us which will never take place." Most significant of all is the testimony of a well-known journalist[2] who has left it on record that only two months before the outbreak of the War, Sir Edward Grey had assured him that "never have our relations with Germany been better. There is all the difference," he added, "in her behaviour to us now and her behaviour in 1911."

Alas! so gratifying an interpretation of the signs and portents of the situation was doomed to be ruthlessly shattered, in a very short time, by the grim force of unanticipated events. On the last Sunday in the month of June in the year 1914, Archduke Francis Ferdinand—heir to the Austrian throne—was assassinated in Sarajevo. Naturally the whole civilised world was shocked by the news of so brutal and unjustifiable a crime. But while the foul deed seems to have stirred in Field Marshal French "an instinctive foreboding of evil," it cannot be said to have

[1]The late Lord Loreburn.

[2]The late Mr. Harold Spender.

produced any such gloomy presentiment among the members of the British Cabinet. For them the tragic event represented just one of those periodic murders which had so long stained the annals of the semi-civilised states in the south-eastern area of Europe. With the funeral of the assassinated Archduke and his consort, the reverberations of the pistol shot, which had momentarily startled the whole world, died down and the members of the British Cabinet were able to turn their attention exclusively to their own domestic anxieties, aggravated, as they manifestly were, by the grim spectre of the Irish crisis which was rapidly assuming the most formidable proportion. At that time Ulster was openly preparing for armed resistance to the operation of the enactment which brought the whole of Ireland under the authority of a Parliament at Dublin, and consequently the sinister perils of civil war were already projecting their grim shadows across the Irish Channel. The attempt at a settlement, which had been made at the instigation of the King, had proved futile, with the result that the closing days of the month of July found the Cabinet in a state of desperation in its harassing task of finding some way out of the deadlock. On the afternoon of the last Friday, the Cabinet, as Mr. Churchill recalls in his memoirs,[1] had been engaged in discussing the Irish problem. "The discussion turned principally upon the boundaries of Fernemagh and Tyrone. Upon the disposition of these clusters of humble parishes turned at that moment the political future of Great Britain. The North would not agree

[1] "The World Crisis," 1911-1914, p. 192.

to this, and the South would not agree to that. Neither seemed able to give an inch." Failure to settle, as Mr. Churchill points out, "meant something very like civil war and the plunge into depths of which no one could make any measure. And so, turning this way and that in search of an exit from the deadlock, the Cabinet toiled around the muddy byways of Fernemagh and Tyrone. The discussion had reached its inconclusive end, and the Cabinet was about to separate, when the quiet grave tones of Sir Edward Grey's voice was heard reading a document which had just been brought to him from the Foreign Office. It was the Austrian note to Serbia. We were all very tired, but gradually as the phrases and sentences followed one another, impressions of a wholly different character began to form in my mind. This note was clearly an ultimatum; but it was an ultimatum such as had never been penned in modern times. As the reading proceeded, it seemed absolutely impossible that any State in the world could write it, or that any acceptance, however abject, would satisfy the aggressor. The parishes of Fernemagh and Tyrone faded back into the mists and squalls of Ireland, and a strange light began immediately but by perceptible gradations, to fill and grow upon the map of Europe."

Out of the tomb of the assassinated Archduke, there had suddenly emerged—just a month after his burial—a hideous spectre which was emitting the dread breath of war. Mr. Churchill has confessed that, after going from the Cabinet Chamber to the Admiralty, he instantly confided in the leading members of his staff

that there was real danger in the situation and that "it might be war."

On the following Monday, the members of the Cabinet reassembled to consider the situation, with its obvious gravity. In Mr. Churchill's words, the Cabinet was overwhelmingly pacific—with at least three-quarters of its members determined not to be drawn into an European quarrel unless Great Britain were herself attacked which was not regarded as likely. In Mrs. Asquith's Autobiography, it is recorded that her husband had confided in her that the outlook was really alarming, "but," he had added, "our fellows don't agree with me." The explanation was obvious. With the majority of the Cabinet, the wish was manifestly father of the thought that there would be no war, and consequently they were content to leave to their colleague, Sir Edward Grey, the gigantic task of sterilising any bellicose tendencies on the part of any of the European powers in a well-grounded confidence that he would spare no effort to ensure the preservation of the peace of Europe.

Although each successive day throughout that eventful and historic week marked a perceptible spreading of the danger zone from the earlier area of a dispute between Austria and Serbia into one that would inevitably bring Germany, Russia and France within its compass, the members of the British Cabinet persisted, with a pathetic stubbornness, in their cherished hope that the threatening calamity would yet pass by. For that reason they refused, even as late as Saturday, the first of August, to assent to Mr. Churchill's request that he should be empowered

to call out the Fleet Reserves in completion of the naval preparations. However, this eagerness to avoid anything that might serve to aggravate the situation proved futile, for, when they reassembled in the Cabinet chamber on the following morning, they were faced by the grim fact that Germany had already declared war on Russia and that consequently the threatening avalanche was being precipitated. Even then, the majority of them refused to contemplate either the need or even the possibility of Britain's entry into the maelstrom, and their attitude was manifestly strengthened by the consciousness that they were thus reflecting both the hope and the desire of a very large and influential section of the nation. Indeed, on the previous day a deputation of the most responsible financiers in the city of London, among whom was the Governor of the Bank of England, had waited upon Lloyd George and had urged on him, as the chief custodian of the nation's finances, the paramount necessity, in the event of an European conflagration, of keeping Britain outside its zone. Strengthened by so strong an appeal from such a quarter, Lloyd George maintained, at Sunday's meeting of the Cabinet, his inflexible opposition to armed intervention in the conflict, although it had now become very evident that leading members of the Cabinet, like Asquith, Grey, Churchill, Haldane, Crewe and McKenna, were bent on standing by France in fulfilment of the spirit and of the implied purpose of the *Entente*. Of the remaining members, it can be said that, while the majority of them were still waiting on events in the desperate hope of being able to clutch at some floating straw

which might enable them to avoid the grim necessity of declaring in favour of Britain's intervention, three of them—Lord Morley, Lloyd George and John Burns—linked, as they were, by the memories of their strenuous opposition to the Boer War and by the consequent bonds of a common consistency—had already come to an understanding with one another that, in the event of a decision by the majority of their colleagues in favour of Britain's entry into the conflict, they should forthwith tender their resignation. However, the situation was perceptibly advanced a stage at Sunday's meeting of the Cabinet when Sir Edward Grey informed his colleagues that, after a painful interview on the previous evening with the French Ambassador, who had pressed, in the most importunate manner, for a definite assurance of support on the part of the British Government, he had felt justified, although unable to promise armed alliance with France, in declaring that if the German Fleet came down the English Channel to bombard the French ports, it would be impossible for England not to intervene to prevent such action. "The announcement," in the words of an eye-witness of the scene,[1] "was received in silence, broken only at last by the voice of Mr. John Burns. 'Mr. Prime Minister,' he declared, 'this means war and I must resign from the Cabinet,' and thereupon walked out. I think," adds the narrator, "that this was the first time the grim word 'war' was actually mentioned, and it seemed like a flash of lightning in the darkness." On the following day, after having

[1]The late Mr. Charles Masterman.

taken, in response to the Prime Minister's most insistent appeal, "a night's reflection," Lord Morley also tendered his resignation, in full expectation that it would be followed by that of Lloyd George. However, in view of the hourly fluctuations in the situation, Lloyd George had felt justified in staying his hand in the hope that his presence within the Cabinet Chamber might serve to tilt the scale against British intervention. But while he thus tarried, events marched forward on the other side of the North Sea with startling rapidity. On the Sunday evening Germany dispatched her ultimatum to Belgium in a peremptory demand for a free and unfettered passage through her territory and on the following day there followed the personal appeal of the King of the Belgians to King George for the due observance by Great Britain, as one of the guaranteeing powers, of the Treaty which provided for the neutrality of Belgium. This development in the situation proved, as Mr. Churchill has pointed out, "decisive," with the result that when the Cabinet assembled on Monday morning, "discussion was resumed in a different atmosphere, though it seemed certain that there would be numerous resignations." Chief among such anticipated resignations was unquestionably that of Lloyd George, for he had hitherto been foremost, within the Cabinet, in resisting every suggestion that Britain should, in any shape or form, enter into the fray. In his unconcealed fear that the Government might ultimately find itself driven, by the force of circumstance, into the bloody arena, he took counsel with Mr. Ramsey McDonald who was at that time the official leader of the Parlia-

mentary Labour Party, and they agreed that, in the event of a decision by the Cabinet to make Britain a belligerent, no course would be open to him other than to follow the example of Morley and Burns in retiring from the government. At the same time Lloyd George made it quite clear to MacDonald that, should Germany be mad enough to violate Belgian territory, he could not stand aside and see a small country, which was giving no provocation, ruthlessly and shamelessly trampled under the iron heel of the invader, and he had the satisfaction of knowing that the Labour leader approved of his attitude. When, therefore, Sir Edward Grey made his historic speech in the House of Commons on Monday, August 3rd, in which he set out, with consummate skill and fairness, the salient features in the situation, Lloyd George's attitude was still uncertain. He was among those Ministers whom Mr. Churchill has described as still clinging "to the hope that Germany would comply with the British ultimatum and would arrest the onrush of her armies upon Belgium."

Sir Edward Grey's declaration captivated the House of Commons, notably in its emphasis of paramount duty of Britain to observe her treaty obligations to Belgium. It had its speedy sequel in the dispatch of a message to the British Ambassador in Berlin in request for an immediate assurance from the German Government that it would respect the treaty rights of Belgium. Later in the day, when it became evident that the request for the desired assurance was in no way retarding the German Government in its

bellicose purposes, a second message was dispatched to the British Ambassador with instructions to serve an immediate ultimatum on the Government in Berlin and, failing the desired assurance before midnight, to ask for his passports, in traditional token of a state of war between the two countries. That ultimatum was delivered, at seven o'clock in the evening, to the German Foreign Minister who replied to the British Ambassador that he could give no answer, other than that which had been given earlier in the day, viz., that the safety of the German Empire rendered it absolutely necessary to ensure the advance of the Imperial troops through Belgium. At the same time he urged the Ambassador to go and see the German Chancellor who had just returned from the Reichstag where he had openly justified the violation of Belgium neutrality, which he frankly acknowledged to be "a breach of international law," on the ground that Germany was in a state of necessity "and necessity knows no law." His astonishment on hearing of the British ultimatum was all the greater because, as had been evident from the tenor of his speech, he had doubted even the possibility of Britain's entry into the arena. "I found the Chancellor very agitated," recorded the British Ambassador in the subsequent narrative in his interview with him; "he said that the step taken by His (British) Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree: just for a word—'neutrality,' a word which in war time had so often been disregarded —just for a scrap of paper, Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing

better than to be friends with her. He held Great Britain responsible for all the terrible events that might happen. I protested strongly against that statement and said that, in the same way as he and Herr von Jagow wished me to understand that for strategical reasons it was a matter of life and death to Germany to advance through Belgium and violate the latter's neutrality, so I would wish him to understand that it was, so to speak, a matter of 'life and death' for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to do her utmost to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked. That solemn compact had to be kept or what confidence could anyone have in engagements given by Great Britain in the future? The Chancellor said, 'But at what price will that compact have to be kept? Has the British Government thought of that?' I hinted to his Excellency as plainly as I could that fear of consequences could hardly be regarded as an excuse for breaking solemn engagements, but his Excellency was so excited, evidently overcome by the news of our action and so little disposed to hear reason, that I refrained from adding fuel to the flame by further argument."

At nine o'clock that evening the British Ambassador dispatched to the Foreign Secretary in London a telegraphic report of what had occurred, but although the message was duly accepted at the Telegraph Office, it was never transmitted. Consequently those members of the Cabinet who had assembled in the Premier's room at 10, Downing Street—Sir Edward Grey, Lord Crewe and Mr. Lloyd George—in a

feverish eagerness to learn the result of the ultimatum, were kept in a state of protracted suspense as they waited, hour after hour, the required reply to the ultimatum. As the last hours of that fatal day traversed the round of the clock with a tardiness that seemed to mock their impatience, the Prime Minister and his colleagues sat in a silence that was tense in its solemnity, and broken only at long spells by some monosyllabic observations which served to relieve the tension. In later years, Lloyd George recalled the memories of that night as "the most solemn and awful" in his life. "We sat waiting for Big Ben to strike the hour," he recalled, "when the ultimatum expired." At last, there fell upon their ears the deep boom of Big Ben as it sounded the midnight hour. With solemn faces, the assembled Ministers looked at one another, at the instigation of a common feeling. Then the stillness became broken by the sound of the Prime Minister's voice—heavy with emotion yet resonant with resolve, as he uttered the fateful words, "It's war."

When Big Ben sounded the midnight hour on that peaceful summer night, it sounded the doom of "the mailed fist" that had so long been casting its terrifying shadow over the face of Europe.

It also proclaimed the hour of Destiny for one member of that little group that had thus assembled in the Cabinet Chamber. For him, as the western world passed from peace to the biggest and grimmest war in the world's history, the conflict was destined to bring such power and prestige as had been attained by no British statesman since the iron days of the great Pitt.

XX

THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM

CHAPTER XX

THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM

THE transformation of Lloyd George, in thus laying aside his long-cherished rôle as the protagonist of peace in order to take his place among the sternest of votaries around the smoking altars of Mars, was as dramatic as was that of Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, and just as sudden in its accomplishment. On the third of August he was as resolutely opposed to Britain's entry into the conflict as were Morley and John Burns, and he made no secret of his intention of following in the track of their retirement from the Cabinet. But before the last of the reverberations with which Big Ben had sounded the midnight hour on the fateful fourth had died away, he had taken his place with Asquith and Grey for war at all cost. To an interviewer, who some months later sought of him the explanation of so remarkable a change of mind and attitude, Lloyd George replied that it lay in one single word: Belgium. "The invasion of Belgium," he added, "made the vital difference, as far as I was concerned, between peace and war." He recalled that on the Saturday after war had actually been declared on the Continent, a poll of the electors of Great Britain would have shown a proportion of

95 per cent against embroiling the country in hostilities, whereas a poll on the following Tuesday would have resulted in a vote of 99 per cent in favour of war; while the "City interests of London," which had been unanimously opposed to the idea of war on the Saturday, on the ground that Britain's participation in a great European war, would inevitably involve them in heavy loss, and might even bring ruin, were by the Tuesday quite as unanimously in favour of Britain's intervention. This revolution in public sentiment, Lloyd George rightly attributed "entirely to the attack made by Germany on a small and unprotected country which had done her no wrong," and what Britain was not prepared to do for interests political and commercial, "she readily risked," he proudly declared, "to help the weak and the helpless. Our honour as a nation," he added, "is involved in this war because we are bound in an honourable obligation to defend the independence, the liberty, the integrity of a small neighbour that has lived peaceably; but being only a small country, she could not have compelled us to fulfil our obligations to her. The man who declines to discharge his debt, because his creditor is too poor to enforce it, is," he exclaimed in the most contemptuous of tones, "a blackguard."

As he readily confessed at the very outset of the conflict, if, after the guarantee given by the German Government that the German Fleet would not attack the coast of France or annex any French territory, Belgium had not been invaded, he would on no account have been a party to a declaration of war by the

British Government, "and I can say the same for most, if not all, of my colleagues," he added. It was the woeful wrong done to Belgium that had roused his indignation and filled his soul with horror. However, the conflict had not been waging many days before he clearly discerned that the violation of Belgium was but a minor phase of the struggle and that a far greater issue than the security of the Belgian people was at stake. "The real issue," declared Abraham Lincoln on one occasion, "is the eternal struggle between the two principles which have stood face to face from the beginning of time. The one is the common right of humanity and the other the divine right of kings." With his newly-begotten vision, Lloyd George perceived, amid the lurid smoke of the battle-field, that this, too, was the all-determining issue that was being so ruthlessly waged to a decision on the plains of Europe; that the war represented something infinitely more than a gruesome conflict between combatant armies; that, in short, it was nothing less than a grim life-and-death struggle between two opposing systems of government for the domination of the world, a struggle between autocracy in its consuming eagerness to subordinate the world's civilisation to the rigorous sway of a single military power, and democracy, with its cherished ideal of a comity of nations, each of which would be free to determine the course of its own destiny. From his new and loftier perspective he was able to see the ordeal in a new and a different setting, in which the assassination of the Austrian Archduke became revealed as the occasion,

rather than as the cause, of the conflict. He was thus able to link effect to cause and to discover the cause in that disordered mentality of the German people which had been begotten of the mephitic fumes of erratic pedants like Treitschke and Nietzsche who had extolled the idolatry of blatant might as the divinely-appointed instrument for the attainment of a world-wide Teutonic triumph. "For me, Humanity ends at the barrier of the Vosges," the Kaiser had ejaculated some months before the outbreak of the war, amid the frenzied acclamation of his subjects who were quick to make its sinister implication.

Thus, in its first, no less than in its last aspect, the conflict was, as Lloyd George clearly envisaged, nothing less than a death-grapple between autocracy and democracy for the government of the world. He saw in the very first round of the struggle what President Wilson came to see three years later, that civilisation was being openly challenged by a military despotism, which had grown savage with its sense of barbaric force, and that only by its complete overthrow could the security of democracy be ensured in any part of the globe.

It is only in the light of the vision that thus came to Lloyd George, that his subsequent evolution, as the personification of the stern and implacable spirit of the British people in their unyielding resistance to Germany's ruthless and bloody attempt at world-domination—the commanding figure in the councils of the Allies, who, with iron resolve proclaimed the policy of the "knock-out blow," as the all determining need of the situation—can be un-

derstood and appreciated. As he publicly confessed in the early days of the conflict, he had been bitterly deceived in Germany, in whose good intentions he had had the most implicit faith even to the point of condoning her persistency in making the heaviest of increases in her fleet and armaments—"her counsellors," he added, "while professing peace and pretending goodwill in cold blood, with malice aforethought, had intended, planned and organised the wholesale murder of peaceable neighbours, and had even arranged the date to suit themselves, a date when they thought their neighbours would be caught unprepared to defend their lives and their homes." To a man of Lloyd George's temperament, with its highly emotional susceptibilities, an impression must needs find its immediate outlet in expression if it is to retain either its vividness or its force. For that reason, while the whole British nation was resolutely adjusting itself to the stern exigencies of the situation in which it had become so suddenly enmeshed, and while the heads of various government departments were frantically devoting themselves to the task of monopolising all the resources of the State for a conflict which most of them had persisted in declaring to be too illusory even to contemplate, Lloyd George took to the public platform as Britain's great advocate in vindication of the determining motives which had led her into the arena. Within little more than a month of the outbreak of hostilities, he addressed a great gathering at the Queen's Hall in London when he delivered a speech which, alike in the clarity with which it

envisaged the momentous issues that were at stake, and in the electrical thrill of its effect, proved to be one of the most memorable utterances during the period of the war. Translated into a score of languages, it sent its resonant vibrations around the globe like a mighty trumpet-blast. Its significance lay in the fact that, while he had in the course of his career addressed hundreds of meetings in vehement protest against war and the policies that provoke war, that was the first occasion on which he had ever spoken in support of war. After an emphatic declaration that there was no man more convinced than he was that Britain could not have avoided intervention in the conflict without incurring the deep stain of national dishonour, he proceeded to refer in tones of searing scorn to the German Chancellor's cynical reference to the treaty which safeguarded the inviolability of Belgium territory, as a "scrap of paper." Facing the vast concourse that had assembled to hear him, he inquired: "Have you any five pound notes on you? If you have, burn them, for they are only scraps of paper. What are they made of?" he proceeded. "Rags! What are they worth? The whole credit of the British Empire," he exclaimed, in a tone that thrilled his audience in instant apprehension of the full implication of the simile. Then in words that glowed with passion, he proceeded to urge that "by the test of our faith, the highest standard of civilisation is the readiness to sacrifice for others." Germany, he pointed out, could understand a country fighting for vengeance, or for greed of territory, but she could not under-

stand a great Empire like Britain, pledging its resources, its might and its very existence to protect a little nation that sought to defend itself. "God made man in his own image, high of purpose, in the region of the spirit," he exclaimed, "but German civilisation would create him in the image of a Diesel machine—precise, accurate, powerful, but with no room for soul to operate." The Allies, he proceeded to claim, were resisting the sinister claim to predominancy of a material head civilisation—a civilisation which, if it once ruled and swayed the world, would inevitably mean the loss of liberty and the extinction of democracy all the world over. For that reason, he contended that the conflict, in its issue, marked a great struggle for the emancipation of Europe from the thraldom of a military caste which had thrown its shadows upon two generations of men and was plunging the world afresh into a welter of bloodshed and of death. "Some have already given their lives," he proceeded to say, as his voice subsided into the tenderest of tones, "and there are some who have given more than their own lives, for they have given the lives of those dear to them. But their reward is at hand: those who have fallen have died consecrated deaths. They have taken their part in the making of a new world. I can see," he exclaimed as in triumphant tone, "signs of its coming in the glare of the battle-field." The concluding passage of his speech, in the vividness of its setting and the sublimity of its imagery, is surely worthy of a place alongside of Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg as among the most memorable in the annals of the world's

great speeches. "May I tell you in a simple parable what I think this war is doing for us?" he proceeded, as a solemn hush fell upon the great audience: "I know a valley in North Wales, between the mountains and the sea. It is a beautiful valley—snug, comfortable, sheltered by the mountains from all the blasts. But it is very enervating, and I remember how the boys were in the habit of climbing the hill above the village to have a glimpse of the great mountains in the distance, and to be stimulated and freshened by the breezes which came from the hilltops, and by the spectacle of their grandeur. We have been living in a sheltered valley for many generations. We have been too comfortable and too indulgent, nay perhaps too selfish, and the stern hand of fate has scourged us to an elevation where we can see the everlasting things that matter for a nation—the great peaks we had forgotten: Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and clad in glittering white the towering pinnacle of Sacrifice, pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven. We shall descend into the valleys again; but as long as the men and women of this generation last, they will carry in their hearts the image of those mighty peaks whose foundations are not shaken, though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war."

XXI

WAR FINANCES AND STRATEGIES

CHAPTER XXI

WAR FINANCES AND STRATEGIES

IN his rôle of Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George was inevitably the first to feel the devastating shock of the outbreak of hostilities, for, before even the first battalion of British troops had had time to cross the English Channel, the whole structure of British finance, with its delicate and intricate mechanism of international trade and credits, began to rock with such violence that its collapse was imminent unless immediate and effective measures were taken to ensure its stability. The explanation was obvious. As Lloyd George reminded the House of Commons, Great Britain had attained to so unique and commanding a position in the world's trade and commerce as was without parallel in history. It had become an essential and the most important part of the machinery that ran the whole international trade of the world. It provided the capital to raise the world's produce and to move it from one end of the world to the other. Half the business of the whole world was being transacted in London solely by means of paper operations. As a result, the paper which was issued from London had become a part of the currency of commerce throughout the world. "All this fine, delicate paper machinery," as Lloyd

George described it, "was crashed into by the great war affecting more than half, and nearly two-thirds, of the whole population of the world." Confusion was inevitable for, as he expressed it, it was just as if one gave a violent kick to an ant-hill. For a short time there was much bewildering consternation in all the marts and exchanges of the world. The top of the ant-hill was off, and as a result there was a very considerable panic. Never before had war been waged either in Britain or in any other country under such conditions.

The result was seen in the immediate deadlock which followed the declaration of war. The whole machinery of the international credit came to a sudden stop. The remittances from abroad ceased in their flow like a cascade of water that has become frozen, in the very process of its movement, in consequence of a sudden and a severe frost. There was a complete cessation of credit, and an utter break-down of the international exchanges. As Lloyd George put it, with his characteristic aptitude for a striking simile, it was exactly as if a shell had broken an arch in an aqueduct and there was a cessation of the flow that had been going on before. Consequently it devolved upon him, as the Minister responsible for the financial resources of Great Britain, to take steps to ensure forthwith a temporary repair of the arch so that the flow of international credit should continue. To such a task he devoted his attention and his energies in characteristic fashion. In his eagerness to secure the best means for the fulfilment of his task, he sought the counsel of the leading bankers

and financiers in the City of London and also the leading merchants who were vitally concerned with the financial interests of the country. Contact with them proved mutually beneficial, for, while he benefited from their advice they, in turn, learnt to appreciate his quickness of apprehension, his marvellous fertility of resources and his boldness in action. As the result of such consultations, a moratorium was forthwith declared by the Government. State aid was ensured for embarrassed banks and receipting houses by the immediate issue of currency facilities and by a guarantee by the State of the due payment of "bills"—those "bits of paper," as Lloyd George described them, which were in circulation all over the globe, with British names on them in token of the honour and stability of British trade and commerce. "It was vital to the good name of Britain," he declared, "that this type of British paper, which has been common currency throughout the world, should not be discredited so that no one should in future have been able to say: 'Don't trust that British paper because in the year 1914—in the day of crisis, it was dishonoured.' We could not have allowed that," he urged in explanation of the drastic action he had felt it his duty to initiate in order to preserve unsullied the honour of Britain, "for if we had done so, we should have betrayed our trust as a government and I think that we should have justified impeachment as a people who in the hour of our country's need had not the courage to stand up for the public credit." As the direct result of the boldness of his measures, he was able to vaunt with justifiable pride that British credit had

stood the enormous strain placed upon it, and the British market had, in consequence, been less affected than any market in the world. "I do not know," he informed the House of Commons, "what further stress and strain may be placed upon the resources of Britain, but that which it has already resisted and the way in which it has resisted, fills me with the conviction that British credit is built on solid foundations which no foreseeable contingency can destroy."

From the first hour of the struggle he had been quick to see that finance would inevitably play a vital part in its ultimate issue and, he set himself, with characteristic resoluteness, to meet the heavy demands of the situation. "We need all our resources, not merely of men but of cash," he informed a deputation from the Association of Municipal Corporations, shortly after the outbreak of War. "We have won with the silver bullet before. We financed Europe in the greatest war we ever fought, and that is how we won. Of course," he added, "British courage and British tenacity always come in and they always will, but let us remember that British cash will do so, too. In the past when the others were quite exhausted, we were getting our second breath, and our third and fourth. We shall spend our last before we are beaten."

The thoroughness with which he translated such precepts into the concreteness of cash was revealed in the War Budget, with its provisions for heavy increase in taxation, which he submitted to the House of Commons in the month of November, when he strongly urged that no small proportion of the required

amount should be secured by direct taxation. "If we do not tax, and tax heavily," he declared, "it will be a serious departure for the first time from the honoured traditions set, and hitherto maintained, by Great Britain in every single war in which it has ever been engaged."

After declaring his proposals for doubling the income tax and for a heavy increase in the duties on tea, beer and spirits, he declared the function of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on such an occasion to be the least picturesque and the most perilous of all the combatants: "He is simply a coal-heaver: he is filling the bunkers of the battleships and is cursed by everybody as a nuisance." Still, as he justly maintained, it was a very essential function at such a time and the far-reaching scope of his financial proposals clearly demonstrated both his readiness and his capability for discharging so onerous and yet so essential a task. He hailed with natural pride and satisfaction the overwhelming success of the British War Loan—the largest loan ever raised in the history of the world—which he designated as, "a loan to help the country to fight the battle for its existence—to fight a battle which lends value to every other security which we possess. Victory," he exclaimed, "means value, defeat means depreciation. There will be no more loud and malevolent talk about the decay and downfall of the British Empire," he added in an exultant tone, "for never have her sons displayed as great valour and skill in her defence; never have they displayed an eagerness to rally to her standard in the hour of her danger."

Early in the year 1915, Lloyd George attended a conference at Paris, between the Finance Ministers of Britain, France and Russia, for the purpose of considering the best means for an effective and joint mobilisation of the financial resources of their respective countries. On his return to London he delivered a speech in the House of Commons in which he reviewed the decision of so important a conclave. An alliance in a great war, he reminded the House, if it is to prove effective, means that each country must bring all its resources into the common stock. "An Alliance of War," he urged, "cannot be conducted on limited liability principles." The practical proposals, as likely to be most conducive to the financial strength and stability of the leading Allied countries embodied a decision that each country should raise money for its own needs within its own markets in so far as its conditions allowed, but that if help were needed by any country for outside purchases, such countries, as could best afford such assistance, would be required to do so. It was further agreed that the accumulated gold reserves in each of the three countries should be carefully preserved for future emergencies and that the purchases by the allied nations in neutral countries should be both systematised and co-ordinated in order to eliminate the confusion and the extravagance which were inevitably begotten when the allied countries set themselves to buy against each other in neutral markets. In the month of May, 1915, Lloyd George introduced his second War Budget and in the course of his speech he made his memorable

reference to Britain's three-fold function in the maintenance of the great struggle, the echo of which was frequently heard in subsequent debates in Parliament. "What service can Britain render to this great combination?" he enquired. "She can keep command of the seas for the Allies," he proceeded to say in reply to his own interrogation, "and that she has done, and she will maintain complete control to the end. That is an invaluable service which she is rendering to the Allies. What is the second service which she is rendering to the Allies? She could, of course, maintain a great army, putting the whole of her population into it, exactly as the Continental Powers have done. What is the third service? The third service which she can render is the one which she rendered in the Napoleonic war, the service of bearing the main burden of financing the Allied countries in their necessary purchases for carrying on the War, purchases outside their own country, more especially; and also to help the Allies with the manufacture of munitions and equipments of war. Britain can do the first, she can do the third, but she can only do the second within limits if she is to do the first and the last. We have raised enormous numbers in this country, but I say, speaking now purely from the point of view of finance, that the time has come when there should be discrimination, so that recruiting should not interfere with the output of the munitions of war and that it should interfere as little as possible with the output of those commodities which we export abroad and which enable us to purchase munitions for ourselves and our Allies."

Mr. Churchill has placed it on record that "a feeling of profound thankfulness" prevailed at the British Admiralty as the first Christmas of the war approached. Both he and his colleagues could justly claim, as they cast their eyes back over the days and the weeks and the months which had been so pregnant with the menace of disaster, that they had survived the travail in triumph and that all their cherished hopes and plans had been realised. The Fleet had proved ready for the greatest ordeal with which it had been confronted. "The great transition from peace to war had been made without disaster, almost without mishap. The mine danger had been overcome. All the enemy's plans for commerce destruction had come to naught. British and allied commerce had proceeded without hesitation throughout the world; the trade and food of Britain had been secured."

At that selfsame Christmastide Lloyd George could, with like force and justice, have also claimed, that he, too, had been found faithful in the discharge of his stewardship, as the head of the British Treasury. He had not left undone anything which should have been done to ensure the preservation of the financial stability of the country amid the general chaotic effects of so ruthless and wide-spread a cataclysm. The delicate mechanism of international trade, which had been in such imminent danger of being thrown into a fatal chaos with the first shock of the War, had been effectively maintained: the validity of the bills of exchange, on which the whole structure of British trade and credit was reared, had been preserved; the largest

loan in the history of the world had been raised with a readiness which had excited both the envy and the admiration of every other country, and from the plenitude of her purse Britain had cheerfully undertaken the main burden of financing all her Allies in the stupendous cost of the necessary equipment of their armies.

He would have been justified in asking what more could any man in his position have done in the circumstances. But he was not the man to lose sight of the paramount issue in a complacent contemplation of the efficient operation of just one of the divers processes that had been devised for its realisation. From the first day of the outbreak of the hostilities, he had become obsessed with the consciousness that the one and the only thing that mattered was "the winning of the war," and that, if the Allied forces failed to secure the necessary triumph in the field, all the efforts of their home Governments, however successful they may have been in their immediate purposes, would prove to be of no avail. For that reason he had, even amid the pressure of his tasks at the Treasury, cast his eye, day after day, over the whole field of operations in an anxious survey of its fluctuating records and vicissitudes. As the struggle dragged on, his apprehension visibly deepened, with the result that the brief respite of "the first Christmas of the war," found him, amid the quietude of his mountain home at Criccieth, in a state of sore anxiety. The course of events had begotten in him the most serious of misgivings and he was anything but satisfied with the means that were being taken by those who were

in authority, either in the field or in the Cabinet, to come to effective grips with the obvious perils of the situation. The overwhelming repulse of the Russian forces at Tannenburg had served to expose their tragic vulnerability, and the seriousness of the Allied position had been further aggravated by the adhesion of Turkey to the side of the Central Powers, with the inevitable complications which it obviously involved in both Asia and Africa.

Even more ominous was the fact that a complete deadlock had set in on the Western Front where Germany was manifestly content to hold the line, with numbers considerably inferior to those of the Allies, in an implicit trust in her unquestionable superiority in machine guns and artillery. Indeed, so marked was the stalemate on the Western Front that a German journal turned it into a matter of jest in the form of a cartoon in which two French staff-officers were depicted in the use of a foot-rule in measurement of the day's advance for the purpose of their report. "The gibe was not unfair,[1] for the winter's record was a chronicle of small things—a sandhill won east of Nieuport, a trench or two at Ypres, a corner of a brick-field at La Bassèe, a few hundred yards near Arras, a farm on the Oise, a mile in northern Champagne, a coppice in the Argonne, a hillock on the Meuse, part of a wood on the Moselle, some of the high glens in the Vosges, and a village or two in Alsace." But these trivial trophies, in a campaign, in which the resources of Britain and France, in men and in treasure, were being so prodigally lavished,

[1]Mr. Buchan's in "A History of the Great War."

while they served only to provoke the scornful mirth of the Teuton, filled Lloyd George with increasing apprehension and alarm. He felt that some drastic change in strategy must be forthwith devised to bring so futile an attrition to an end if the Allies were to secure that triumph in which their very existence was so clearly involved. And so with that ingrained intuitiveness for discerning the strategical element in a situation, which he had so often displayed in the political arena, he focussed his attention on the military situation for the purpose of divining a surer and a more expeditious course to the required end. The results of his reflections, reinforced by a close and intelligent observation of the whole theatre of war, were embodied in a carefully prepared memorandum which he submitted, on his return to London, to the consideration of the Cabinet. In that document, he strongly urged that, as the diversion of a large proportion of the German troops from the Western Front clearly demonstrated the intention of the German Staff to crush Serbia, for the two-fold purpose of over-awing Bulgaria on to their side and of securing a clear route to Constantinople, the Allies should forthwith counter such a piece of strategy by shifting the centre of gravity of the conflict to that area where the Germanic power touched the Danube and where it was being heroically held at bay by the stern resistance of the Serbian Army. He therefore suggested that, while a sufficient number of British troops should be retained on the Western Front to maintain its impregnability, the surplus should be transferred to the Near East for the purpose of a

strategical diversion along the line of the Danube which would thus ensure effective protection for Serbia against the onrush that was already being prepared for her devastation and would at the same time thwart Germany in her cherished object of securing a clear corridor to Constantinople. Lloyd George reinforced these strategical suggestions with a clear calculation of the forces that would be at the disposal of the War Ministry. He estimated that with the force of 300,000 which was already in France and the further force of 700,000 which would be ready for service in the spring of 1915, the British Army in the field would represent a million men. In the disposition of these forces, he suggested that 400,000 should be reserved for the Western Front and that the remaining 600,000 should be drafted to Salonika where he calculated their presence could not fail to affect the attitude of both Greece and Rumania and so secure their immediate entry into the War on the side of the Allies. Their intervention, he pointed out, would mean a further increase of half a million men. As a result, an army of over a million men would thus be secured for the Allies in the Near East and that augmented force could ultimately be launched in a great offensive against Austria on her most vulnerable frontier. Consequently she would find herself compelled to detach a large portion of her troops from the defence of Cracow and thus expose Silesia to a Russian advance. He strongly stressed the consideration that a strategic diversion of this kind, along the coast of Dalmatia, which had long been coveted by Italy, could not fail to make its appeal to her, and consequently

secure her adherence also to the cause of the Allies. To that major enterprise Lloyd George urged the addition of a minor operation against Turkey which was known to be at that time organising a force on Syrian soil for the invasion of Egypt. His plan provided for the dispatch of a British force of a hundred thousand men into Syria so that, while the Turkish Army would be engaged in launching an attack on the Suez Canal, it would find itself hopelessly cut off, and, as a result, the effective possession of Syria would be ensured. Although the scheme was but the handiwork of a layman, who was utterly untutored in the technique or even in the rudiments of military strategy, it displayed the supreme virtue of a vivid discernment of the dominating exigencies of the situation and even a clairvoyant conception of the most urgent of its needs. It addressed itself to the cruciality of the situation for it specifically provided for that "strong local intervention by Allied forces in the Balkans," which Sir Edward Grey had already declared to be supremely necessary before the Allies could hope to succeed in their feverish efforts to win Bulgaria to their side. With its provision for a great military demonstration in the Near East where, as Mr. Churchill expressed it, "England with her Navy and her money, was counting for little," the suggested scheme was manifestly devised for the purpose of so impressing the Balkan peoples with the triumphant might of the Allies as to allure them to the side of the conquering hosts. Lloyd George was confident in his anticipation that, under cover of such a scheme, the confederation of the Balkan states would

be revived amid the comradeship of the battlefield, and that in the march of its armies there would be effected a short but decisive cut into the eastern flank of the foe. Before committing itself to any definite decision on the feasibility of so daring a project, the Cabinet took the natural course of referring it to the consideration of Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces. His report, which was immediately forthcoming, was emphatically adverse to its adoption on the three-fold ground:—

(*a*) That the possibility of breaking through the German line in Flanders had not been proved and that that operation was feasible provided a sufficiency of high-explosive shells and of guns was provided.

(*b*) That even if it were proved impossible to break the German line, so large a margin of safety was needed that troops could not be withdrawn from the Western Front. "It is to be remembered," urged Sir John French, "that the Allies are in a much better position to await the outcome of events. Time is against Germany; she will not sit forever behind her entrenchments, and the Allies must be prepared with an adequate force to strike her whenever she may attempt to break out or to withdraw."

(*c*) That there were no theatres, other than those in which operations were then in progress, in which decisive results could be obtained.

Sir John French supplemented these views with a memorandum for General Joffre, who was then commanding the French forces in the field, in which he declared that the French General Staff considered a German offensive possible and even probable in the

near future, and that consequently the Western Front must be made absolutely secure for, if it became broken, the consequences for the Allies would be of the most serious description. "We must place ourselves in the position of being able to assure the offensive," added General Joffre, "and we must never lose sight of the decisive result and all secondary operations must consequently give way." In face of so adverse a report from the military commanders, the War Council had no course other than to reject Lloyd George's plan and on the 9th of January Sir John French received an official intimation that the War Council had come to the conclusion that "certainly for the present, the main theatre of operations for British forces should be alongside the French Army and that this should continue as long as France was liable to successful invasion and required armed support."

However, it is an ill wind that does not fill the sail of some barque. The rejection of Lloyd George's daring plan afforded Mr. Winston Churchill, with his inbred passion for strategic dispositions, a favourable opportunity for urging his ardently cherished project of a naval and military attack upon the Dardanelles. In common with Lloyd George, he had been quick to see that Germany, having succeeded in establishing a stale-mate on the Western Front, might succeed in creating a like deadlock on the Eastern Front against Russia and that, in consequence of so strategic a position, she would be able to divert so small surplus of her forces to the task of bursting through Serbia, sweeping into her orbit the neutral

country of Bulgaria which was manifestly waiting on the turn of events before deciding on her choice of the belligerents, and of triumphantly effecting a formidable union with the Turkish armies in Constantinople. With a clear road to Constantinople she would be in a position to menace both Egypt and India and so compel the British forces to relax their grip on the Western Front in their eagerness to rush to their defence. So transparent a stroke of strategy could only be successfully countered by forestalling it and for that reason Mr. Churchill conceived the desirability of a quick and a decisive blow at the Dardanelles on the ground that, as Germany's route to the East lay through a narrow neck of territory, her whole project could be successfully frustrated by an immediate severance of that neck. So glowing an anticipation was by no means wide of the mark for, as Mr. Buchan has observed, Italy was at the time still in the valley of indecision and the downfall of Turkey and its influence upon the Balkan States would compel her to action. "Turkey's defeat would have an effect upon the Balkan position like the addition of a new chemical to a compound—it would leave more of the constituents unaltered." To the obvious force of such considerations Lord Kitchener, with whom the final decision lay, felt constrained to give heed, especially as a frantic appeal for help was then being made by the Russian Army which was being hard pressed in the Caucasus. Still, notwithstanding Lord Kitchener's admission that the Dardanelles project was the only feasible plan for an effective diversion in the East, Lloyd George remained unconvinced

that it had the advantage over the larger and more daring plan that he had so strenuously urged. When, therefore, the naval attack on the Gallipoli forts, was being launched and a demand made for the assistance of military drafts, he insisted that "the Army should not be required or expected to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the Navy and that if the Navy failed, we should try somewhere else in the Balkans and not necessarily at the Dardanelles." He continued to maintain that Austria, rather than Turkey, which he regarded as "essentially a side-show," should be made the main objective of the initiative and resourcefulness of the British forces in the East. The rapid development of events soon served to vindicate Lloyd George's intuitive fear of the menacing possibilities of the situation, in the form of a sudden swoop upon Serbia, for before the month of January was far advanced, the British Government learnt that Germany was already making great preparations for a ruthless invasion of Serbia. The gravity of the peril instantly goaded him into a fresh entreaty to his colleagues on the War Council to take immediate and effective steps for going to her help and on his initiative a Note was sent to both Greece and Rumania to urge on them the supreme duty of coming to the help of their neighbour in the peril which was about to close upon her. On the 26th of January there came a reply from Venizelos to the effect that Greece would be willing to come to the assistance of Serbia provided that Bulgaria expressed her readiness to enter the conflict in support of the Allies; or, failing such an

undertaking, that Rumania should come in and that Bulgaria would pledge her neutrality.

On the strength of so encouraging an intimation, Lloyd George had no difficulty in persuading Lord Kitchener to agree, subject to the approval of the French Government, to the despatch to the Balkans, of the Twenty-ninth Division which was at that time undergoing training on home soil. However, with the decision of the War Council on January 26th to make a naval attack on the Dardanelles, Lloyd George became anxious lest such a decision should react adversely on Lord Kitchener's promise of armed support for the Serbians and so he forthwith dispatched the following communication:—

"My Dear Lord Kitchener,—

"You will, I am sure, have seen telegram No. 14 in last night's sections—from Sofia. It is so obviously the German interest to crush Serbia in order to detach Bulgaria from the Triple Entente and to free a way to Constantinople that it is risky to doubt the accuracy of this telegram. The French delayed assistance to Antwerp until it was too late. This time the responsibility is ours and we shall not be held blameless if a catastrophe occurrs.

"Ever sincerely,
"D. Lloyd George."

The deepening gloomfulness of the situation, with Rumania's definite decision to maintain her neutrality and Bulgaria's ominous action in negotiating a loan of three million pounds to Germany, invested Lloyd

George's plea with fresh urgency. In its apprehension of the growing ugliness of the situation in the Near East, the War Council readily agreed that Lloyd George should cross over to Paris in order to confer with the French Cabinet, which had hitherto stubbornly refused to countenance a project that involved the diversion of British armies to the remote Balkans. As the result of Lloyd George's fervid advocacy of the paramount claims of Serbia for effective help in her grim task of holding the pass in the Balkans, the French Cabinet expressed its willingness to dispatch a French division for the reinforcement of the Greek Army, in addition to the British division which Lord Kitchener had already agreed to provide.

Unfortunately, Lloyd George's mission stirred up misgivings at the British Headquarters in France, and these apprehensions found their expression in a somewhat querulous communication which General French addressed to Lord Kitchener:

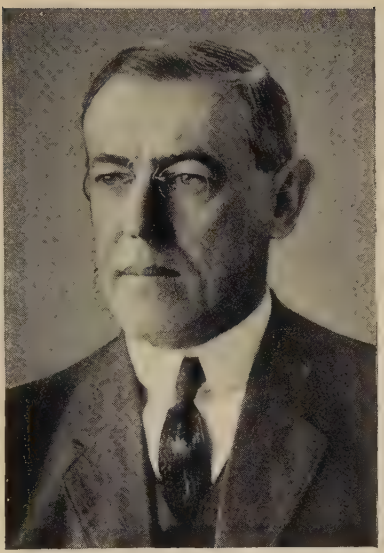
> "Lloyd George and Montague," he wrote, "were here to-day on their way back from Paris. I understand there is still a question of sending troops to the Balkans. I find it very difficult to understand why the appearance of British and French soldiers in that part of the world should have so great an influence, and unless something very decisive in that way will be gained by such a move, it appears to be a strategical mistake."

Happily Lord Kitchener had a far clearer insight into the requirements of the situation than had

General French; for, so far from regarding the presence of British troops in the Balkans, in the face of an imminent menace to the security of Serbia, "a strategical mistake," he realised, as his biographer has observed, that the offer of a British Division to Greece in such circumstances would be a cheap price to pay for her assistance, and very possibly that of Rumania also, and for that reason he expressed his readiness to add a Territorial Division to the Twenty-ninth Division.

Alas! The triumph of Lloyd George's mission proved to be a short-lived one, for on the morrow of his return from Paris a communication was received from M. Venizelos to the effect that, inasmuch as neither of the conditions stipulated in her previous note had been complied with, Greece could not see her way to join the Allies. The explanation was obvious. The Teutonic influences in the Greek Court, aided and abetted by the perfidy of King Constantine, had succeeded in their machinations and Greece had been scared from following the line of her manifest sympathies and, as subsequent events proved, of her advantage also. Though Lloyd George's bold scheme for an effective military demonstration in the Balkans, was thus, by the pressure of adverse circumstances, finally abandoned, its soundness as a strategic conception remained unimpaired. As one of the shrewdest of observers has justly declared, "Mr. Lloyd George, in some way, better realised the nature of the war and the relations of its parts to the whole than his colleagues or the General Staff. His Eastern scheme may have been quite impracticable,

LORD KITCHENER



PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON

SIR EDWARD GREY
(Viscount Grey of Falloden)

RT. HON. H. H. ASQUITH
(Earl of Oxford and Asquith)

but it did recognise the importance of Austria which was never sufficiently understood in this country. Victory against the Turk might perhaps be in Mr. Churchill's phrase, 'a victory such as the world had never seen,' but it would certainly have decided nothing at that stage. But in theory at any rate Mr. Lloyd George's schemes were admirable. There was something big about them and nothing of the limited liability, tip and run, two-pence-coloured-adventure character which has tempted British statesmen to so many costly and tragic failures from Walcheren to Gallipoli." When, some months later, the ruthless assault upon little Serbia by the Teutonic hordes which he had so clearly foreshadowed, became an accomplished fact and her gallant people were subjected to the direst of savageries, while the Allies were constrained to look on in an anguished impotence, and when, further, as the immediate result of Serbia's conquest, Germany secured a direct route to Constantinople which enabled her to replenish the depleted resources of the Turks in their resistance to the invaders at the Dardanelles, Lloyd George could not but gloomily reflect that, had his suggestions been heeded in time, so overwhelming a catastrophe would have been averted. As it was, there was no more distressed observer of her agonising martyrdom than himself.

XXII

MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS

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THE War had not been long in the process of its operations before Lloyd George, who, at the outset, was firmly persuaded that "the silver bullet" was destined to be the determining factor in the final issue, came to realise, that even a plenitude of financial resource availed a combatant country little unless and until it was transmuted into the form of shells and of guns. As soon as that fact broke in upon him he diverted his attention from the Treasury to the workshops as the arterial vein of the conflict. "We stand more in need of equipment than we do of men," he declared in the course of a speech early in 1915. "This is an engineers' war," he continued, "and it will be won or lost according to the efforts or shortcomings of engineers. Unless we are able to equip our armies our predominance in men avail us nothing. We need men," he added, "we need arms more than men, and delay in producing them is full of peril for this country."

With his intuitive keenness of perception in discerning the crucial element in a situation, he had quickly sensed the perils in the grim and devastating exigencies with which the British forces were being confronted. At the outset of the conflict he had

pointed out, in proof of the claim that Britain had in no way been responsible for precipitating the conflict, that she had been armed only for defence and consequently had "to improvise an army after the War had begun." But while that fact clearly exonerated the British Government from any part in the crime of the conflict, it involved the guiltless in the grim disadvantage of being utterly unprepared for the shock when it came. Unlike those of Germany, the industries of Britain had not been organised for the production of munitions on the scale of a Continental war. The seriousness of the situation was further complicated by reason of the fact that the Ordnance Board of the War Office had been content to base the needs of the British Army exclusively on their experiences of the South African War in which shrapnel had constituted the essence of its equipment. In that war, shrapnel, with its power of sweeping the opposing forces on the open ground of the veldt and of cutting through wire entanglements, had proved effective in its purpose; but, in the conditions which the German legions had established on the Western Front, with their permanent trenches, their solid earthworks and their machine-gun emplacements, the use of shrapnel was glaringly ineffective. The entrenchments of the foe could be effectively attacked only by means of high explosives. Its use, as General French quickly discovered in the first stage of the conflict, was a matter of imperative necessity for the artillery no less than for guns of heavy calibre. It was no easy matter, as the War Office authorities discovered, when they found themselves daily im-

portuned by General French for supplies of high explosives, to turn from the supply of the one substance to that of the other, for the manufacture of high explosives necessitated a different kind of machinery which was not at their command. In their distraction they sought to discharge their responsibility by lavishing orders on the chief armament firms, who readily accepted them only to farm them out, in turn, to sub-contractors. It was an easy thing to hand out contracts with a lavish hand, but it was a far different thing to ensure their due and prompt fulfilment. And it was at that crucial point in the accomplishment of the required task that the hustle of the War Office came to grief. The arrangements broke down in their long circuit from one set of contractors to another, with the dire result that orders were seriously delayed in their execution, deliveries were retarded and even when, after a long and exasperating delay, the munitions did come to hand, they were found to be very far short of the requirements. In the words of Dr. Shadwell, who had every opportunity for marking the situation, "confusion, competition and conflict made the industrial field a bog of inefficiency which nullified the really great efforts that were being made."

The chaos in the workshops, where the resources were so hopelessly outmatched by the unprecedented magnitude of the demands, was seriously aggravated not only by the absence of thousands of skilled artisans who, in the flush of their patriotic fervour, had flocked to the colours, but also by the implacable discontent of large sections of the men who had taken

their places in the shops, and who were losing sight of the gravity of the situation in the insistence with which they were urging their own demands. It was the tragic irony of such a situation that led Lloyd George to declare in an obvious reference to the industrial dispute that was being waged on the Clyde, that it was intolerable "that the life of Britain should be imperilled for the matter of a farthing an hour."

Although Lloyd George's personal responsibility, as a Minister of the Crown, revolved strictly around the care of the nation's purse with the manifest duty of ensuring all the necessary financial resource for the prosecution of the conflict to its triumphant issue, he instinctively realised that it was also his duty to see that the money, which he was busily raking in at the receipt of customs, was being spent to the fullest advantage. He had served as a member of the Committee which Lord Kitchener had constituted in the latter part of 1914 for placing contracts both at home and in the United States for large supplies of rifles; but, in spite of constant and of the most urgent of entreaties, the deliveries were tardy and utterly inadequate to the demands of the forces in the field. Early in the year 1915 there was called into existence a "Committe of Production" which was appointed for the purpose of considering the most effective means for expediting the largest output of munitions from the engineering establishments throughout the country. Within a fortnight of its appointment, the Committee reported "a continuous need for shells and fuses." Notwithstanding the urgency of its recom-

mendations, the manifest need continued unrealised, with the result that the situation became so desperate that the Government found itself forced to take up the matter. Early in the month of March, 1915, Lloyd George brought forward in Parliament a Bill for powers to enable the Government to take over the control of all works capable of being used for the production of the material of war. In submitting the measure, he explained that the Government proposed to organise the whole of the engineering resources of the country for the purpose of ensuring an increase of output. A central Committee, he explained, would be invested with the control of the engineering community and at its head, he added, there would be placed "a good strong business man with some go in him who would be able to push the thing through." It was very manifest that Lord Kitchener, in the exercise of his plenary powers at the War Office, had undertaken far more than any one man could even hope to accomplish, and his difficulties were perceptibly aggravated by the fact that, having spent his life exclusively in eastern lands, he was at an obvious disadvantage when he came to deal with conditions of western warfare which he had not previously encountered. There was therefore no little justification for General French's complaint that "Lord Kitchener did not comprehend the importance of artillery in the war, took no effective measures to increase its supplies and concealed the truth of the situation from his colleagues in the Cabinet." However, the situation in regard to supplies was steadily approaching its breaking-point. In the month of March, General French

had, in open disregard of military conventions, accorded an interview to a representative of the Press in which he declared the struggle to be "a rough war, but," he added, "the problem it sets is a comparatively simple one—munitions, more munitions, always more munitions; this is the essential question, the governing condition of all progress, of every leap forward." A few days later there appeared in the *Times* the report of a further interview with General French in which he declared that "the protraction of the war depends entirely upon the supply of men and munitions. Should these be unsatisfactory, the war will be accordingly prolonged. I dwell emphatically," he added, "on the need for munitions."

Naturally, these declarations sent their echoes through the land and caused a deep feeling of uneasiness in every section of the community. So deep and general was the disquietude that the Prime Minister deemed it necessary, in the course of a speech at Newcastle in April (1915) to allay the public anxiety with an emphatic assurance that never had any Army or Navy entered upon a campaign with better or more adequate equipment. In the most categorical fashion he declared that there was "not a word of truth" in the statement that the operations of the British Army were being hampered by failure to provide the necessary ammunition.

Mr. Asquith was afterwards taken to task, by a section of the British Press, for a statement which was subsequently proved to be inaccurate. It is but just, however, to point out that Italy was on the point of joining the Allies in the field, and consequently a

public confession of failure to provide the necessary munitions for the prosecution of the War could not but have had a disastrous result in cooling the ardour of the Italian people and even in deflecting them from their purpose. But, as subsequently transpired, Mr. Asquith had stronger grounds, than those of prudential considerations, for making so definite and emphatic a repudiation of the charge that the British Army was being handicapped by lack of the necessary supplies, on the strength of a personal communication from Lord Kitchener who had informed him that he had had a talk with General French on the matter. "He told me," declared Lord Kitchener in his letter, "I could let you know that with the present supply of ammunition, he will have as much as his troops will be able to use in the next forward movement."

Moreover, on the day following that on which Mr. Asquith had made his statement at Newcastle, Lloyd George, in the course of a speech in the House of Commons, readily endorsed the Prime Minister's statement at Newcastle. "Take the figure 20 as representing our output in September," he proceeded to say. "By October," he continued, "it went up to 90 again, because the new machinery which was laid down did not come into operation until a month later. By December it went up to 156; in January it was 186; in February it was 256, and in March it was 388."

The recital of these striking returns had the immediate effect of allaying the anxiety of the House of Commons, and the assembled Members caught the glow of gratification which they had already begotten

in the spokesman of the Government—in blissful ignorance of the fact that these returns had reference almost exclusively to 18-pounders and not to the supply of high explosives for which the forces in the field had been so insistently clamouring.

However, the sense of satisfaction begotten of the emphatic declarations thus made by Asquith and by Lloyd George had its converse among the military chiefs in the field. As General French afterwards confessed, the perusal of Asquith's speech at Newcastle created in him a keen feeling of chagrin. "I lost any hope," he wrote, "that I had entertained of receiving help from the Government as then constituted." Brooding over the bitterness of his disappointment in thus finding his appeals and warnings to the War Office openly discounted, his attitude became one of resentment, and he began to conceive of ways and means for retaliating on the Government. Early in the month of May, the British forces came into action at the Battle of Festubert for the ostensible purpose of diminishing the exacting pressure of the enemy at Ypres. Although the necessity of such action was manifestly imperative, General French confessed that he embarked upon the task with a disconcerting sense of anxiety, for, in spite of all his entreaties, less than eight per cent of the shells were explosive while the ammunition at his command provided for only forty minutes of artillery preparation. On the tower of a ruined church, as he subsequently wrote, he spent several hours in close observation of the operations, and nothing since the Battle of the Aisne, he confessed, had ever impressed him so deeply

with the terrible shortage of artillery and ammunition as did the events of the day. And as he watched the Ambers Ridge, he sadly marked the great inequality of the artillery duels, and as attack after attack failed, he realised with a poignancy of feeling that the absence of sufficient artillery support was doubling and even trebling his losses in men. From that scene he hurried back to his Headquarters in resolute pursuance of his purpose without regard either for the etiquette of his profession as a soldier or for the personal consequences which his machinations might involve. At Headquarters he found a ready instrument to hand in Colonel Repington, who, in his rôle of War Correspondent, was naturally only too eager to give publicity to his views. Colonel Repington lost no time in despatching his message to the *Times*—which, in turn, signalised its importance by investing it with the imprimatur of large type and striking head-lines. After describing the result of the British attacks in the districts of Fornelles and Richebourg as "disappointing," the message continued in explanation of the disheartening failure of the attempt. "The attacks were well planned and valiantly conducted. The infantry did splendidly, but the conditions were too hard. The want of an unlimited supply of high explosives was a fatal bar to our success." These grave words, as the *Times* justly claimed on the day following their publication, "made a deep impression throughout the country." The old sense of anxiety that things were not as they should be was revived afresh and the mind of the nation became visibly perturbed. In his eagerness to turn this general

sense of apprehensiveness to practical account, General French took the bold course of sending one of his A.D.C.'s who had the advantage of being a Member of Parliament,[1] to England for the purpose of bringing under the personal attention of Lloyd George copies of the correspondence which had passed between himself and the War Office with regard to the shortage of high explosives. He chose Lloyd George as his confidant in the emergency on the ground that he had, in General French's words, "shown by his special interest in the subject that he grasped the deadly nature of our necessities." The result of such disclosures was exactly what General French had both desired and anticipated, for, as soon as Lloyd George learnt of the real state of affairs at the front, his indignation knew no restraint.

For some time Lloyd George had been growing restive in his position as the Chairman of the "Shells" Committee, which the Cabinet had set up for the purpose of accelerating the all-imperative supply of munitions for the forces in the field. He felt aggrieved because the War Office, in its stubborn secretiveness, was persistently withholding from him the necessary information in regard to the requirements of the Army. Moreover, he was thwarted in his purposes by reason of the fact that a Cabinet Committee had no executive power. It could only advise and recommend. While he was thus bemoaning his own limited powers to force the pace and was contemplating the serious step of resigning his position, there occurred, with all the suddenness and force of an explosion,

[1] Capt. F. E. Guest, M.P.

an incident which had the immediate effect of shaking the Government to its foundations. The incident was the resignation of Lord Fisher from his position as the First Sea Lord, in consequence of an implacable rupture with Mr. Churchill at the Admiralty. It was the culmination of perpetual dissensions between "two strong men of incompatible tempers, both bent on an autocracy"—each with a rival project in the use and direction of the British Navy.

As soon as the news of Fisher's resignation became known, Mr. Bonar Law wrote to Mr. Asquith in expression of his dismay at so impossible a situation. He made it quite clear that the Conservative leaders would not countenance any attempt to keep Churchill at the Admiralty while Fisher had been left to go. Though he readily acknowledged that the situation in Italy, with the prospect of her early entry into the War on the side of the Allies, made it particularly undesirable to precipitate anything of a controversial nature in the House of Commons at so critical a juncture, Mr. Law did not hesitate to urge that the position was such as to demand "some change in the constitution of the Government." Faced by such an ultimatum, Mr. Asquith was left with no course, consonant with patriotic considerations, but to agree to a reconstruction of his administration on the basis of a Coalition Government. Although, as Lord Beaverbrook,[1] who writes with the authority of one who moved behind the scenes at the time, has justly observed, "the real cause" of the fall of the Liberal Government thus lay in this open rupture

[1] In "Politicians and the War."

between Mr. Churchill and Lord Fisher, it can be truly said that its immediate effect was to provide Lloyd George with his long-desired opportunity for changing, to his obvious advantage, the centre of gravity of the Cabinet. For some time he had been at open variance, in the Cabinet Chamber, with Lord Kitchener, whose persistent secretiveness he instinctively disliked; while Kitchener, on the other hand, had found reason to complain of him as "a peppery little Welshman," although Kitchener felt himself constrained to add, in bare justice to him, "he is obviously out to win the War."

With the disbandment of the Liberal Ministry and the consequent creation of a Coalition Government, there came not merely a redistribution of offices, but also the creation of fresh posts which the exigencies of the War had made necessary. Chief among these was the Ministry of Munitions to which was transferred from the War Office all powers for providing the British Army with the necessary equipment in the way of guns and shells. Such an arrangement had the obvious advantage of establishing a Department which would be devoted exclusively to the provision of the required munitions and would, consequently, be untrammelled in its operations by any of the circuitous methods which had hitherto marked the overburdened administration at the War Office. Public opinion audibly designated Lloyd George as "the man of push and go," whom he himself had adumbrated as absolutely imperative for such a task; but he could not but feel gratified that the prospect of his appointment moved the leading financiers in the city of London to address a fervid

appeal to the Prime Minister to retain him at the Treasury on the ground that, in their opinion, there was no one who was so qualified to occupy the post at such a time of national emergency. The significance of so signal a tribute was all the more marked in face of the fact that, in the months prior to the outbreak of the War, he had had no more bitter opponents than these City men.

And thus it came about that in the first week of June (1915) he took his departure from the Treasury in order to install himself at one of the fine old mansions in Whitehall Gardens which, with their spacious rooms and gilded ceilings still retained the prestige of their ancient estate. He took with him Sir Hubert Llewelyn Smith, whose administrative capacities he had learnt to prize during his tenure of the Presidency of the Board of Trade, Dr. Addison, M.P., who had rendered him conspicuous service in the controversy with the medical profession over the Health Insurance Bill through Parliament, and his own private secretary, Mr. J. T. Davies. In the hour of its formal initiation the quartette constituted the complete staff of the new Ministry. "At the first meeting of the four of us," wrote Dr. Addison later, in reminiscence of the occasion, "the dominant resolve was that there was this one thing to do and that no other distraction, domestic or political, should be allowed to stand in the way at any time."

The newly-appointed Minister and his little band of energetic coadjutators soon discovered that in no case were there any guns for more than about half

the number required. It was ascertained that even if there had been no arrears in delivery, the shortage would still have been a very great one in the medium types, while in the case of the heavier guns the orders for those necessary to provide the full equipment had not even been given. In the words of Dr. Addison, the supply of gun ammunition was even worse than the supply of guns for, whilst the guns available were short of the numbers required, little more than half of them were fully supplied with ammunition. It was further discovered that an important contributory cause of the shortage of complete rounds of ammunition was the short supply of one or other of the required component parts. In illustration of the extraordinary discrepancies between promises and performances, Dr. Addison has cited the startling fact that, while the promises for 18-pounders were for 118,500 each week, the supply in one week in the month of May was as low as 5,881, and in no week had exceeded 16,699. He further cites the case of a well experienced firm, which had an 18-pounder shrapnel order for which delivery was to begin in March, 1915, but in June none had been delivered and they were actually 232,500 in arrears. These tragic examples of delays revealed the utter lack of arrangement and method in connection with the manufacture of the necessary supplies. They served also to bring home to the Minister of Munitions and his little band of assistants the gigantic task with which they were confronted.

However, they had barely embarked upon their gigantic task before they found themselves ham-

pered by the most obstinate of difficulties. "With the wide extension of munitions manufacture that was taking place," Dr. Addison recalls, "we were bombarded every day for samples, drawings, designs and specifications, and a host of technical questions kept coming up which affected the earliest as well as the latest stages of manufacture and supply. But both of these were under the control of the department which had not been transferred to the Ministry of Munitions. It was like working in a great chamber with a narrow opening at each end, neither of which we commanded. Drawings and specifications had to be supplied before anybody could begin manufacture, as well as gauges, and it was the business of Woolwich and the Ordnance Board to supply them. When the manufactured articles had been delivered, they had to pass through Woolwich for filling and completion. The result was that, whilst people all over the country were bursting with enthusiasm and with the capacity to help us, we had to look elsewhere for the supply of the things necessary for the very beginning of manufacture, and many were the indignant remonstrances at their not being forthcoming. Furthermore, when a considerable volume of supply came in, the arrangements at Woolwich for filling, assembly and completion were found to be very inadequate, and we were not in a position to deal with the inadequacies."

So chaotic a state of affairs might well have overwhelmed the stoutest of hearts with the feeling of the appalling helplessness of the task. But Lloyd George soon showed that he was not the man to

be daunted by any sort of difficulty, however formidable it might appear to be. With characteristic resource and energy he applied himself to the immediate task of tackling the chaos in the various workshops with the view of smoothing it out into shape and order. He soon discovered, after a careful examination of the causes of the appalling arrears, that there were many directions in which the responsibility for the delays could not fairly be laid to the charge of the individual firms who were supplying the component parts. He ascertained that in some instances machines had been delivered but could not be set up owing to a lack of skilled labour; while, in other instances, though the machines had been set up, they were at a standstill on account of shortages of materials. He forthwith addressed himself to the obvious needs of such a situation with a thoroughness which developed into ruthlessness in the process of its operation. Basing his action on the sound principle that "where there were machinery and men it was obviously necessary to get the material to them, and where there were men and material, suitable machines that were standing idle, should be supplied to them," he set up what his chief assistant described as "the tyrannical process of control," whereby the Department took command of all the necessary materials and of all the machine tools throughout the country. "Steel billets or forgings, brass strips, copper for bands and so on, were taken from one man's works and moved to another's. One firm was turned on to do a part of another's work, machinery was taken from one works and removed

to another in an orderly but bewildering hustle." Such a ruthless distribution of material and labour inevitably led to a confusion in costs and, in the confusion, stores accounts became hopelessly mixed. But what mattered that to the new Minister of Munitions who had become responsible for the delivery of the goods to the armies in the field? In his view, confusion in costings was infinitely preferable to chaos in production, and so he pursued his purpose in ruthless disregard either of entreaties or of protests on the part of the firms who found their machinery being summarily wrenched from their workshops and transplanted to districts where it could be used to greater advantage.

Even these ruthless efforts to cope with the arrears did not suffice to exhaust Lloyd George's energies in the resolute discharge of his duties. With his intuitive perception of the salient need of a situation, he was quick to see that he could fulfil his allotted task, in "speeding up" the supplies to the required point, only by bringing home to both the contracting firms and their employees, in the most vivid fashion, an overpowering apprehension of their personal responsibility for the fate of their own gallant countrymen who were heroically facing the direst of perils in defence of the security and the liberties of the homeland.

To that end he set out, immediately after his appointment as Minister of Munitions, on a crusade to the various industrial centres of the land. He inaugurated his campaign with a meeting at Manchester for the purpose of organising the engineering

resources of Lancashire on the most effective basis, and at that meeting he assured his audience that it depended more upon the masters and the men who were occupied in running the workshops of the country, than upon almost any section of the community, whether Britain would ultimately emerge from so colossal a struggle, "beaten, humiliated, stripped of power, and honour, and influence, the mere bond slave of a cruel military tyranny, or whether she would come out triumphant, free and more powerful for good than ever in the affairs of men." He attributed the German triumph, in flinging back the Russian armies, not to any superior valour of the German legions, but rather to their overwhelming superiority of shot and shell, and of the munitions and equipment of war. "It is a war of munitions," he declared. "We are fighting," he continued, "against the best organised community in the world, and we have been employing too much the haphazard, leisurely, go-as-you-please methods which would not have enabled us to maintain our place, as a nation, even in peace very much longer." He urged that the nation needed all the machinery that was capable of being used for turning out munitions, equipment and all the skill that was available for that purpose. "Everything," he proceeded to declare, "that would help us to overcome our difficulty and supply our shortages we want to mobilise in such a way as to produce, in the shortest space of time, the greatest quantity of the best and most efficient war material. That means victory," he exclaimed in a ringing tone. "It means a great saving of natural strength and resources, for it will

shorten the war. It means an enormous saving of life. It would say to workmen and to masters," he continued in a tone that visibly thrilled the audience, "when you turn out shells, you are not turning out something merely to kill the enemy, you are turning out something which is to save the life of a comrade. Every shell you turn out is a life-guard for some of those gallant fellows who are leaving our shores to risk their lives."

From Manchester he carried the fiery cross to Liverpool where he stirred the emotions of his audience with the fervour of his appeal for quickening efforts in the task of providing more and still more munitions. "We want to suspend during the War," he declared, "not merely Trades Union regulations but some Government regulations, too. We want rifles, we want guns, we want shells, fuses, chemicals, explosives. There is one thing we want less than usual, and that is Red Tape. It takes such a long time to unwind, and we cannot spare the time." After pointing out that, if all the skilled engineers in the country were turned on to produce what was required and even if they were worked to the utmost limits of human endurance, even then there would not be enough to produce all that was required. For that reason he appealed to the patriotism of Trades Unions to relax their rules in order to eke out the skill in the task of turning out the necessary munitions for winning a real triumph. "Let us," he urged, "equip ourselves in such a way that Great Britain through the War will be still great and when the War is over, will be a greater Britain than ever."

At a great gathering at Cardiff, composed of representatives of the engineering trade of South Wales, he submitted what he described as "three business propositions." The first was a proposal for setting up national factories which should do nothing but turn out "shot and shell" for the Army. The second he described as the method which had been adopted in France with great success whereby each workshop should undertake to turn out as many shells as the machinery capacity it possessed would enable it to do, while the third proposal embodied a plan which combined both methods. "I am here," he proceeded to declare in the course of his speech, "to ask you to plant the flag on the workshops. Every lathe you possess," he added with his unrivalled aptitude for a striking phrase, "recruit it, enlist it. Convert your lathes and your machinery into battalions which will drive the foe from the land which he has tortured and devastated and trampled upon, and disgraced, and liberty will be once more enthroned. There was a famous historic personage who once turned back and was converted into a pillar of salt, and tradition in the district says that the fact is responsible for the Dead Sea. Whether this is true or not, believe me, if Britain turns back on this journey and on this task, she will become nothing but a 'dead sea' among the nations."

From Cardiff he journeyed to Bristol where he reminded his audience that the engineers of Britain, employers and workmen, could win the war, but without them victory was impossible. "I want to get that," he exclaimed, "into the minds of every

employer, every manager, every foreman, every worker, however humble he be—skilled and unskilled alike —that without their best efforts victory is impossible, but that with them victory is within our grasp. I trust to the employers to keep each other to the mark; I trust to the workers to do the same, for we are all on the same raft." He recalled a scene in one of the Erckmann-Chatrian tales of the Conscripts at the battle of Waterloo. They had been fighting all day and fighting very bravely. Suddenly in the evening they had a sense that there was nothing behind them. The field was empty; there was no support and for the first time their hearts failed them. Our fellows are fighting gallantly," Lloyd George cried out as he proceeded to press the moral of the incident, "and God alone knows what they have to face. When they are told to go forward in the face of the dread machinery of a scientific foe, they have never flinched; they never knew any faint-heartedness. Do not let them one day feel that the field behind them is empty and there is no support. Let them hear the ring of the forges of Britain and the hammers of the anvil, and then they will say: 'Our fellows are behind us, let us go forward.'"

The effect of such speeches, with their vivid presentation of the one dominating issue and their thrilling note of personal appeal, was as deep as it was instantaneous. Employers and employees alike caught the contagion of the orator's passion for winning the war, and, as a result, they laid aside those considerations for their respective rights, which were so visibly straining their mutual relations, in an all-

determining consciousness of their common interests and duties in the face of a common peril.

He supplemented these public appeals to large bodies of men by the closer intimacy of private interviews with groups of leading manufacturers, in his eagerness to persuade them to discard their most cherished customs, even to the unprecedented point of making common cause with their avowed rivals.

At the time of his appointment to the Ministry of Munitions, he was absolutely unversed in the technique of munitions and even, as he subsequently confessed on the floor of the House of Commons, "blissfully unaware of the vital differences between high explosives and shrapnel." However, with his installation in his new office, he made personal visits to the various munition works for the purpose of making a close inspection of their machinery. He devoted himself to the task of mastering, in all its intricacies, the technique of shell-making and of gun-making, with the result that he became so proficient in the necessary knowledge that he could distinguish between the various materials required for the shell body, for the fuse, for the cartridge case and for the explosive. In less than a month of his appointment, he produced on the floor of the House of Commons amid the manifest wonderment of the assembly, the fuse of a high explosive shell which, as he proceeded to explain with an ease that might well have evoked the envy of even an expert, was not nearly so complicated as the fuse of shrapnel, for, though this was supposed to be simple, it required no less than one hundred different gauges to turn it out.

Even more significant of the resoluteness with which he pursued his main purpose, was the visit which he paid to General French at the Headquarters of the British forces in France in order that he might secure direct from him a detailed statement of the needs of the Army. On his way back from the Western Front he halted in Paris for the purpose of conferring with the French military experts in regard to the requirements of the Allies in artillery, and on his initiative there was held at Boulogne a Munitions Conference of the Allies. The importance of that incident lay in the fact that, although the war had been in progress nearly a year, that was the first occasion on which English and French munitions experts had formally conferred together in regard to the supply of weapons and of ammunition for the Allied forces. Lloyd George returned to London, convinced of the supreme importance of big guns in trench warfare and determined to ensure their supply on the fullest possible scale. So great was his obsession of the all-determining need of big guns that he actually doubled, and even trebled, on his own responsibility, the number which General French had stipulated as the measure of his requirements. The lavish manner in which he issued his orders for the guns, regardless of cost, naturally scared his successor at the Treasury who was perturbed by the problem of finding the money, and it was no secret that the Cabinet shared his perturbation. But the Minister of Munitions remained unconcerned with the fears of his colleagues. He adhered to his plans with so unyielding an obstinacy that the Cabinet felt itself

compelled to capitulate to him. Dr. Addison has boldly asserted that the stand which was thus taken by Lloyd George in July, 1915, for the big gun programme, was his most important contribution during the whole course of the war; while Mr. Churchill, a year later, in the course of a speech in the House of Commons, declared that, when the whole story of the big guns came to be told, the Empire would realise what a debt it owed to the insight and the courage of Lloyd George at so fateful a period.

From the day on which he first appeared at the sparsely-furnished room at the mansion in Whitehall, in initiation of the formal establishment of the Ministry of Munitions, Lloyd George realised his own ideal of the required "man of push and go," who would divert almost every industry in the land to the production of munitions and galvanise the whole community to the point of the highest possible output. He made a levy on the best business brains of the country and enlisted their services in the work of the Ministry. He made all munitions works "controlled establishments" on the ground that whatever suspension of trade union regulations was made necessary, it would be entirely for the benefit of the State and not for that of the individual employer. The machine-tool trade was brought wholly under the control of the Ministry, and a census of all the engine-capacity and machine power was instituted. The whole country was divided into twelve munition areas, and forty local munition committees were appointed for their administration. Manufacturers had at their command all the necessary technical

advice. "Hustlers" were appointed for the purpose of stimulating the execution of contracts, and in every one of the areas there was a branch office of the Ministry at which specifications, gauges and samples could be seen and processes could be explained.

Within a few weeks of its creation, the new Department had developed into a mammoth establishment, with its tentacles in every district throughout the land.

Within three months of its creation, over 800,000 persons were daily occupied on the manufacture of munitions. In every sphere of production the galvanic effects of the new Ministry were made manifest. New factories sprang into existence all over the land; old factories pulsated with a quickened energy; delays were diminished and a new spirit perceptibly animated all ranks among the workers.

Twelve months after the establishment of the Department, which had thus sprung into existence with the suddenness of a mushroom, Mr. Montague, who had, in the meantime, succeeded Lloyd George as the Minister of Munitions, concluded a speech on the floor of the House of Commons, in which he had glowingly reviewed its astonishing record of phenomenal achievements, with a fervid eulogy of the part played therein by his energetic predecessor. "Everything I have said of our success," he proceeded to say, "is a tribute to him. He chose the great leaders of industry who formed the pivots of our machine. He formulated the needs of the moment to labour and persuaded them to agree to meet our necessities.

He realised the scope which our operations should embrace in all the essentials of the production of munitions, and his tireless energy and vigorous personality were the inspiration of the whole vast fabric. He set himself to do more. He realised how much of our prospective supply of big guns was hypothecated to the Navy. He realised how long it took to collect the raw materials and to train labour. It is no secret to say that he ordered far more heavy guns than was then thought by the War Office to be necessary. It is no secret to say that before he left the Ministry of Munitions he had the satisfaction of receiving new requirements from the War Office which showed that he had not ordered too many but too few; and yet, notwithstanding that, it is due to his foresight that the surplus guns will be all ready in or about early spring of next year. For this one courageous act alone and for the Ministry as a whole—the country owes him the greatest debt of gratitude."

The remarkable foresight which Lloyd George had thus displayed in anticipating the magnitude of the demands of both the Army and the Navy, together with the unflinching courage with which he carried out his plans, in spite of harassing remonstrances from the Treasury, was splendidly vindicated in the results which were made manifest among the forces in the field. In his volume "1914" General French looks back, with an undiminished sense of relief and of gratitude to June, 1915, "when at last," as he declares, "Mr. Lloyd George came to the rescue and entered upon his career of patriotic salvation. Britons all over the world will ever remember this

distinguished statesman with the utmost gratitude as one of the greatest of the Empire's sons. Only those who were in any degree associated with Mr. Lloyd George in this time can fully realise the awful responsibility which rested upon him, and the difficult nature of the problem he had to solve. His work was done in face of a dead weight of senseless but powerful opposition, all of which he had to undermine and to overcome." In another page of his book, General French emphasises afresh the unmeasured gratitude of the nation to Lloyd George for his wonderful work in the provision of the required supply of munitions. "The successful solution of the problem came," declares the distinguished soldier, "when Mr. Lloyd George applied to it that matchless energy which has enabled him to come through the ordeal as England's most valued leader in her direst hour."

Prior to Lloyd George's appointment as Minister of Munitions, General French had lamented that the troops under his command had gone valiantly to their death "when a few more guns and a few more shells would have many a time saved their sacrifice."

But when, in the summer of 1916, just a year after the establishment of the Ministry, the British forces embarked upon their first offensive on the Somme, against the entrenched enemy, General Douglas Haig, who had succeeded General French as Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies, was able to report that the supplies of ammunition were "approximately adequate to the conduct of major operations." The stupendous achievements of the Ministry of Munitions, under the galvanic influence of its man of "push and

go," could be duly tabulated in terms of guns and shells, of gauges and motor-trenches, but who is there who can compute the direct results of his energising régime either in the number of gallant lives that were saved, by the provision of ample means of defence in the throes of a hundred bloody conflicts, or in the consequent determination of the ultimate issue?

XXIII

MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

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IT IS not without significance that Lloyd George had barely embarked upon his task at the Ministry of Munitions before he began, in the ardour of his all-dominating conviction that "output was everything in this War," to conceive of the need of resorting to the drastic device of industrial conscription. To him the War was a unity, in which the soldiers in the trenches and the industrial workers in the homeland were alike involved—in one common task and in one common fate. "The trenches are not all in Flanders," he reminded a great body of official representatives of the miners of Great Britain who assembled in conference in London shortly after his appointment as Minister of Munitions. "Every pit," he proceeded to say, "is a trench in this War, a labyrinth of trenches; every workshop is a rampart; every yard which can turn out the munitions of war is a fortress; picks, shovels, lathes, hammers, they are as much the weapons of this great war of European liberty as the bayonet, the rifle and the machine-gun. The man who does not handle them with all his strength," he added, "is failing as much in his duty as the soldier who runs away from the battle at the front." In Lloyd George's eyes the munition worker was a kind

of industrial soldier and consequently should be liable to the same stern discipline.

In the speech which he delivered at Manchester, in the inauguration of his crusade for an increased output of munitions, although he had been careful to point out that "to introduce compulsion as an important element in organising the nation's resources of skilled industry and trade does not necessarily mean conscription in the ordinary sense of the term," it was very obvious that, in the chamber of his own mind, the idea of industrial conscription was already in process of gestation. He returned from his Lancashire tour, as Dr. Addison subsequently testified, "infected with the idea that proposals for labour conscription were required"—to the unconcealed consternation of Lord Reading and Dr. Addison himself, both of whom had the utmost difficulty in urging on him the case against such compulsion on the ground that, whilst there was undoubtedly slacking and short time in some quarters, it was certain that, even in a time of danger, the British people would not tolerate a proposal that involved forced labour unless an overwhelming case could be made in favour of it. However, Lloyd George agreed to give heed of their representations provided that evidence should be forthcoming in support of their contentions. Within a month, the work of the various Munitions Committees was such, in both volume and speed in production, as to convince the Minister of Munitions that "the bottom had been knocked out of his suggestion." He, therefore, abandoned the idea and never again revived it.

But though the idea of industrial conscription was thus finally jettisoned, the basic conception of compulsion as an imperative necessity of the existing situation remained with him and in a very short time it began to creep into his public utterances in the form of a suggestion for military conscription. "Conscription," he declared in the course of a speech in the early summer, 1915, "means raising, by compulsory methods, armies to fight Britain's battles abroad." Even that, he pointed out, was "a question, not of principle, but of necessity. We won and saved our liberties in this land," he proceeded, "on more than one occasion by compulsory service. France saved the liberty she had won in the great Revolution from the fangs of tyrannical empires purely by compulsory service. The great Republic of the West won its independence, saved its national existence by compulsory service, and two of the greatest democratic countries of Europe to-day —France and Italy—are defending their national existence and liberties by means of compulsory service. It has been the greatest weapon in the hands of the democracy many a time for the winning and preservation of freedom." Still, even after so trenchant a plea in justification of resort to military compulsion in the time of need, he was quick to realise that such a sentiment was far in advance of the cherished traditions of his own countrymen and so he hastened to assure his audience that "it would be a great mistake to resort to it unless it be absolutely necessary."

However, as the weeks went by, he became increasingly convinced of the absolute necessity of a scheme

of conscription, for, as he was quick to observe, the voluntary scheme was operating greatly to the detriment of the country. Large numbers of young men, who were required for the vital industries, were, in the ardour of their patriotism, flocking to the colours; while those, who could have gone and ought to have gone, were content to remain at home. Moreover, there was much indignation throughout the land at the prospect of married men, who had attested under the Derby scheme, being called up, whilst single young fellows who had no home responsibilities were refusing to come forward. And so from one end of the country to the other, there was heard, with increasing resonance, the clamour for equality of sacrifice. The reverberations of the clamour were heard in the Cabinet chamber with the most decisive effect. A small section of the Cabinet instinctively regarded the demand as being absolutely alien to the long cherished traditions of the nation, but they were manifestly perturbed by the startling paradox provided by Lloyd George, in his new rôle as the foremost champion of conscription. A fatal cleavage in the Cabinet was avoided only by Lord Kitchener's proposal that a quota, in the provision of the necessary manpower, should be allotted to each district with the stipulated proviso that, if by a specified time, the required number was not forthcoming, a compulsory ballot for the balance should then be taken. However, it soon became evident that the quota scheme was destined to prove abortive and Lloyd George pressed afresh for resort to compulsion. "There is no indignity in compulsion," he declared in the

course of a speech in which he justified his attitude, "for compulsion simply means that a nation is organising itself in orderly, consistent, resolute fashion for war. Taxes are compulsory. Compulsion simply means," he added, "the will of the majority of the people—the voluntary decision of the majority. It is simply organised voluntary effort. You must organise effort when a nation is in peril. You cannot run a war as you run a Sunday-School party, where one man voluntarily brings the buns, another man supplies the tea, and another brings the kettle; one looks after the boiling and another takes round the cups, some contribute in cash and a good many lounge about and just make the best of what is going. You cannot run a war like that."

By sheer force of argument, reinforced by the dominance of his personality, he succeeded in his purpose of compelling the Government to resort to the adoption of military conscription as the need of the situation. As he subsequently pointed out, what was heresy on his part in the month of September (1915) became an orthodoxy in the following January. Great as was thus the measure of his achievement, it must be added that the sense of smoothness, with which so drastic a rupture from the highly-treasured traditions of the nation was effected, could not have been accomplished but for the masterly skill with which Mr. Asquith preserved the national unity at every step in the process.

XXIV

SECRETARY FOR WAR

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WITH his success in securing the adoption of military conscription, the evolution of Lloyd George, as the dominating figure among British statesmen, may be said to have passed through three successive stages. The first of these stages was that in which he was obsessed with the belief that financial resource —"the silver bullet"—was the all-important factor in the struggle, and accordingly set himself to the task of draining the taxable capacities of the nation to their utmost limits and of raising loans on a scale which was absolutely unprecedented in the world's history.

The second stage came with his all-dominating conviction that the output of munitions would turn out to be the determining factor in the decision of the issue. With that conviction, he had strained every nerve in the stupendous task of converting Britain into one gigantic workshop, whose output should prove equal to every demand of the conflict.

With the attainment of his task in ensuring the required supply of munitions, he began to discern that even an abundance of munitions would avail little unless they were re-inforced by the necessary man-power, since it is always the man behind the

machine that ensures its efficiency. It was the recognition of this consideration that led him on to the third stage in his evolution, in an open and even defiant rupture not only with the traditions of a lifetime, but even with the convictions which he himself had strenuously held in the early weeks of the war. On the occasion of his first War Budget he had urged in the most emphatic fashion that the time had come when there should be discrimination so that recruiting should not interfere with the output of munitions or even with that of commodities which Britain exported. The glaring contrast between that emphatic declaration in November, 1914, and his open espousal, six months later, of the right of the nation, "when the need is clear," as he put it, "to take the necessary steps to call forth its manhood to defend honour and existence," represents the completeness of his transformation in his all-absorbing contemplation of the magnitude of the task with which the Allies were confronted and of the gravity of the issues involved therein.

On the fifth of June in 1916, the British people were literally stunned by the appalling news of the tragic disaster which had befallen Lord Kitchener in the sinking of the ship on which he was setting out for Russia. But while the sound of lamentation over so terrible and irreplaceable a loss was being heard throughout the land, the Prime Minister found himself faced with the immediate necessity of filling the all-important post of Secretary for War which had become vacant by Kitchener's death. According to Asquith, "one in high position" called upon him on

the day following the news of the disaster, to urge on him Lloyd George's claims for the position. It is easy to understand the attraction which the vacant post possessed for him.

In the provision of material resource for the forces in the field on a scale which should prove absolutely adequate to their demands and even to their unforeseen exigencies, he had practically completed his gigantic task at the Ministry of Munitions. The Department had become firmly established and consequently would be able to function with so automatic an efficiency, that it left little scope for any further initiative on the part of its chief director. For that reason it had lost its earlier charm for him with his insatiable passion for "push and go." It was the sphere, which entailed the exercise of both his gifts and energies, that appealed to him; for the greater the difficulty, the greater was its attraction. It was for that reason that he coveted the reversion of Kitchener's post as the Minister of War, notwithstanding the fact that, largely as the result of his own insistence, the position had been stripped, during Kitchener's tenure, of several of its traditional prerogatives and responsibilities. Even the right of issuing orders to the armies in the field, which had always been invested in the Secretary of State for War, had been taken from him and delegated to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the exercise of an "Order in Council." Still, in spite of this division of authority at the War Office, Lloyd George made no secret of his eagerness to succeed to the vacant post, for he was quick to discern that there

still remained to its occupant a determining voice in the matter of strategy in the field, and the determination of strategy, as he justly conceived, was everything in the circumstances. "Strategy is more than geography," he declared on one occasion, and he could have added that the right of fashioning strategy was the one thing that he desired above all others. Hence his eagerness for Kitchener's fallen mantle.

When the offer of the post desired was subsequently made to him, he took counsel with a number of his personal friends. They were agreed in their advice that, notwithstanding "the unfortunate thing," whereby the Order in Council had transferred certain powers from the Secretary for War to the Grand Staff, so that the remaining powers had become "very shadowy in many respects," Lloyd George should accept the position even though he would be entering upon its duties with less power than he felt he ought to have. "We agreed," testifies one of the little band whom Lloyd George had thus called into consultation, "that it was necessary that Lloyd George should have in his pocket sufficient powers from the Prime Minister and that we could trust him to square up matters amicably with Robertson."[1]

The barrier in the way, however, proved much more formidable than that little group of friendly advisers had anticipated. As one of the acutest of observers has testified, "nobody could describe Sir William Robertson as complaisant. As much a self-made man

[1] Sir William Robertson, who was at that time the Chief of the Grand Staff at the War Office.

as Lloyd George, he knew exactly his own mind, and he literally expressed that mind with the most tersely idiomatic directness. Moreover, Sir William was known to hold the strongest opinions that the War would be lost or won on the Western Front, and the ideas of Eastern strategy, favoured by Mr. Lloyd George, were founded on a dangerous delusion. The two men were almost equally stubborn, though in different ways. Mr. Lloyd George, infinitely various in means, always ready to sacrifice a little fish if it would land a big one, kept his main end always in view; Sir William simply relied on the immovability which won for him in France the nickname of 'Le General Non-Non.'"

Between two such masterful personalities, so diametrically opposite in temperament, in policy and in methods, and with no common denominator other than an unyielding stubbornness in the pursuit of a cherished purpose, the clash was inevitable. At the outset, Lloyd George, in his unconcealed determination to direct the policy of the War Office, with all that it involved in the direction of the struggle in the field, had recourse to the exercise of those subtle gifts of diplomacy with which he had been so long accustomed to lead captive the most stubborn of men. But, as he soon discovered, it was in vain that he plied his mesmeric charms on the rugged figure of the Chief of Staff. Sir William Robertson proved as adamant to both his smiles and his frowns as is the rock-bound coast alike to the zephyrs of spring and the storms of winter. "He would listen stolidly, but also with some im-

patience, to a long series of suggestions, and then veto them, each and all, rather like a tired nurse dismissing an ingenious child's complicated pleas to stay up. Nothing would induce him to justify his objection by long technical explanations."

And so the relationship between the new War Minister and his Chief of Staff, which should have been one of mutual confidence and cordial co-operation, became more and more strained until at length it developed into one of reciprocated distrust. Later in the summer, Lloyd George journeyed to Paris, to meet the French Minister of War in private conference, for the purpose of considering the best means for ensuring the most effective employment of the joint military resources of France and Britain. The Conference ended with the publication of an official communiqué that "satisfactory conclusions" had been attained. Naturally, the announcement had a most perturbing effect upon Sir William Robertson who had been left out of the conference, and his keen feeling of resentment, in thus finding himself ignored in a matter which directly impinged upon the duties of his position as Chief of Staff, was articulated by leading newspapers in a protest against any interference, on the part of a civilian, with the military experts. Lloyd George showed himself impervious to all such protests on the ground that, as the representative of the War Office in the Cabinet, he was responsible for the general lines of strategy in time of war, in accordance with the unbroken traditions of the office. Sir William Robertson's ruffled feelings were only soothed by the comforting knowledge that he could continue

DAME MARGARET LLOYD GEORGE

MISS MEGAN LLOYD GEORGE

WIFE AND DAUGHTER

to count upon the support of the Prime Minister who had displayed, throughout, a meticulous readiness to recognise the prescriptive right of the military experts to determine the main lines of strategy.

In his chagrin in thus finding himself thwarted in the pursuit of his eager purpose in fashioning the policy of his own Department, Lloyd George made no secret of his grievance and a perceptible feeling of restiveness began to mark his attitude towards his own colleagues. He was obviously awaiting an opportunity when he could force the issue on a more advantageous ground. The opportunity came in the autumn of 1916. On the 27th of August, the Allies had been enormously encouraged by the announcement that Rumania, whom they had long been striving to cajole to their cause, had at last resolved to cast aside her neutrality and to make common cause against the common foe. Her entry into the fray was immediately signalised by a series of dramatic military triumphs. Transylvania was penetrated to a depth of fifty miles and many important towns captured. But alas! these striking successes proved to be as delusive as an interlude of sunshine on an April morning. The Rumanian advance was instantly checked by a sudden and treacherous attack in the rear by Bulgaria in savage token of her adhesion to the cause of the Central Powers. With his highly developed intuitiveness in sensing a situation, Lloyd George instantly discerned the ominousness of the Bulgarian attack and his fears were accentuated by the fact that the fierceness of the German attack on Verdun was being perceptibly diminished. His

memory of the cruel fate, which had overwhelmed Serbia, because the Allies had not anticipated in time the gravity of her perils and had consequently not prepared for the emergency, had lost none of its poignancy. "Too late in moving here! Too late in moving there!" he had murmured in the tones of a mournful soliloquy in the course of a speech on the floor of the House of Commons in the preceding December. "Too late in coming to this decision!" he continued. "And too late in starting that enterprise. Too late in preparing! In this War," he added as his voice became charged with a gravity of tone, "the footsteps of the Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of 'Too late'; and unless we quicken our movements, damnation will fall on the sacred cause for which so much gallant blood has flowed."

Acutely apprehensive of the ominous signs of the situation in Rumania, and undeterred by the force of the long-established tradition that the strategic dispositions of the forces in the field was the exclusive concern of the military experts, Lloyd George decided to address an appeal to the Prime Minister in urgent solicitation that effective measures should be forthwith taken to meet any emergency that might arise in Rumania and so save her from any possibility of the tragic fate that had overtaken Serbia. He therefore despatched in the first week of September a memorandum to Mr. Asquith in which he laid bare his anxiety in regard to the situation in the Balkans. He reiterated his apprehension that Hindenburg, with his strong Eastern

proclivities, would direct his attention to the crushing of Rumania, and, on the strength of such fears, he urged that the British Government should forthwith set itself to think out every practicable plan for giving Rumania effective support in the event of her being heavily attacked. "We cannot afford another Serbian tragedy," the memorandum proceeded in the emphasis of its plea, "we were warned early in 1915 that the Germans meant, in confederation with the Bulgars, to wipe Serbia out. In spite of that fact, when the attack came, we had not purchased a single mule to aid the Serbians through Salonika. The result was, when our troops landed there, owing to lack of equipment and appropriate transport, they could not go inland and Serbia was crushed." In this memorandum he stressed "three disquieting facts in the situation," which he described as Hindenburg's well-known Eastern inclinations, the declaration of war by Bulgaria against Rumania, and the slackening of the German attack on Verdun. In view of the meagre equipment of the Rumania Army, with its very scanty supply of heavy guns, he expressed his grave doubts whether it could possibly survive a continuous fight lasting over several weeks. "I therefore once more urge," he continued, "that the General Staff should carefully consider what action we could, in conjunction with France and Italy, take immediately to relieve the pressure on Rumania if a formidable attack developed against her. There may be nothing in my fears," he added, "but no harm could be done by being prepared for all contingencies." The memorandum served to revive afresh the old con-

troversy between the "Easterners" and the "Westerners," in which the military experts at the War Office had already hermetically sealed their minds against any suggestion that the centre of gravity in the struggle should be transferred from the Western to the Eastern Front. In their view Lloyd George's cherished idea that the deadlock in the West could be effectively relieved by pressure on the enemy's embattlements in the East represented nothing more than the ill-conceived project of an amateur strategist, and was absolutely devoid of any military value. When, therefore, Sir William Robertson learnt that the new War Minister was again pressing his suggestion for a diversion of the British forces to the East, he forthwith intimated to the Prime Minister that, if any encouragement were given to Lloyd George's suggestion, he should fling up his position as the Chief of the General Staff and retire from the War Office. Faced by such a dilemma, the Prime Minister sought its solution in ready adherence to his customary loyalty to the military experts in all matters affecting considerations of strategy, with the result that the Chief of the General Staff had the satisfaction of "trumping" the proposals of his own chief. The keen sense of chagrin, which a man of Lloyd George's dominating temperament could not but feel in the circumstances, was seriously aggravated by the turn of events which was already taking place in the East. Even before the month of September had run out, the earlier triumphs of the Rumanian Army had become eclipsed by a series of unrelieved disasters. The Roterturm Pass, with

its arterial highway into Rumania, had been captured by the German legions, while South of the Danube, Mackensen was triumphantly marching towards the Dobrudja. Although the Rumanians fought with the most desperate valour, their plight, for the want of that measure of effective support from the Allies, which Lloyd George had so clearly envisaged, some weeks earlier, as the crucial need of the situation, proved beyond recovery, with the result that the tragic fate of Serbia, with all its devastating horrors, had its grim repetition in the case of the sister state of Rumania.

The Rumanian disaster had the immediate effect of rousing in Lloyd George a deep sense of indignation. It was little satisfaction to him to point out that he had in his memorandum foreseen the possibility of the catastrophe which had overhwelmed the Rumanian forces, but he justly felt that he was entitled to complain that his suggestions—the value of which had since been fully vindicated by the course of events—had not been given their due. Finding himself thus thwarted in the exercise of the prerogatives which had hitherto inhered in the post of Secretary of War, he resolved to resort to a drastic course in the enforcement of the rights of his office. He could not forget that, time and again, in the past, whenever he had wanted to have his own way at the hands of the Prime Minister, he had invariably succeeded in his purpose under cover of a threat of resignation. It was under stress of such a threat that he had accomplished his purpose in the formation of the Coalition Ministry in May, 1915, in spite

of the fact that the Prime Minister had only a few days previously declared in the House of Commons that he saw no necessity for such a course; and it was recourse to the selfsame threat that ultimately constrained the Prime Minister, when he was delaying the appointment to the vacant Secretaryship of War, to offer the position to Lloyd George rather than to Lord Derby whose claims to the reversion were being strongly backed in most influential quarters. Lloyd George required not to be told that he had made himself absolutely indispensable to the Government. After the manner of Lord Kitchener, the whole country had come to realise that "the little Welshman" was out to win the War at all costs, whilst his phenomenal achievements at the Ministry of Munitions had won for him a commanding and an unchallengeable position in popular favour.

Secure in that consciousness, it was not surprising that he should feel he was in a position to dictate his own terms even to the head of the Government. He made no secret of the fact that the supersession of a Liberal Cabinet, in which he could count upon no ardent henchman, by a Coalition Ministry had not fulfilled his expectations. In the one Ministry as in the other, the authority of Lord Kitchener had been regarded with a deference which bordered upon awe, and the duty of abstaining from any interference with the military experts had been observed in the most meticulous and even awesome fashion. With the disappearance of the formidable figure of Kitchener from the scene and his own appointment to the War Office, Lloyd George had confidently expected that, at length,

he would be in a position to have a potent and even a determining part in matters of strategy. Great, therefore, was his disappointment in finding that, so far from being able to pursue his cherished purpose, he was being persistently thwarted by a much more formidable stickler, in the person of Sir William Robertson, for the rights of the experts than Kitchener had ever shown himself to be. It was very evident that the War Office could not possibly hold them both within its compass, without the certainty of recurring clashes. Consequently, the advantage of concord beneath its roof could only be attained by the departure of one of them, and Lloyd George was resolved that he would not be the victim. During this period of restiveness, he turned for counsel and encouragement to Sir Edward Carson, whose masculine personality had proved a tower of strength to him during the period in which they were associated as colleagues in the Cabinet. He had found a sympathetic coadjutor in the distinguished lawyer when he was pressing his suggestion for effective protection to Serbia against Bulgaria. The policy of an inflexible thoroughness in the prosecution of the War, which Sir Edward Carson had urged on the Cabinet, was reflected in his bold suggestion that the British Government should resort to coercive measures against Greece in order to make the King's party in Greece, with its unconcealed partiality for Germany, afraid of Britain. When he found that the Cabinet was not prepared to resort to his iron policy, he resigned from the Cabinet, and in justification of his action he openly indicted the Gov-

ernment on its lamentable lack of promptitude in arriving at decisions which the exigencies of the situation demanded. It was no secret that Lloyd George was in full sympathy with the consideration which had prompted Carson's resignation and he was restrained from following his example only by a confident anticipation that the back-wash of the eminent lawyer's departure from the Cabinet could not fail to ensure a more resolute attitude on the part of his colleagues. However, as the weeks and the months passed by, without any sign of the expected change, he began to coquet with the contemplation of his own resignation. In the month of June, 1916, immediately after the death of Kitchener, he had intimated to the Prime Minister that he wanted to speak freely to the nation in regard to the menace of the situation but that he felt that he could not do so whilst he remained in the Government, whereupon the Prime Minister had implored him to put any such thought out of his mind on the ground that it would be utterly impossible for the Government to spare him. It is no doubt true that no mean factor in restraining him from so drastic a step was the reflection that the Government had survived the shock of the resignation of even so pivotal a figure as Sir Edward Carson and he was much too eager to have a part in the direction of so momentous a struggle to be ready to throw in his hand unless he was assured that his resignation would lead to something far more than a temporary troubling of the surface of the waters.

However, with the disaster to Rumania and the unyielding refusal of the Grand Staff at the War

Office to concede him any share in the responsibility for determining considerations of strategy, his contemplation of resignation was revived afresh. He left his official residence at Downing Street to take up his abode at a flat in the West End, in an obvious intimation to the Prime Minister that he was becoming estranged from his colleagues. He resumed relationship with Sir Edward Carson in the comradeship of a common purpose. While both of them were thus awaiting the psychological moment for common action, events played into their hands. In the month of November, a debate took place in the House of Commons over the disposal of enemy properties in Nigeria. In his rôle as the trustee of the interests of the natives, and in his consequent eagerness to secure the highest price for them, the Governor of the Colony advertised the sale of the properties in certain neutral countries as well as in Britain and the Allied lands, whereupon a number of the Conservative Members in the House of Commons took strong exception to the sale on the ground that it involved a betrayal of Imperial interests. As a result, the matter came under discussion in Parliament and the conflict of views on the issue precipitated a cleavage on the Conservative benches. On the one side was Mr. Bonar Law, the titular leader of the Party, supporting the sale, as a member of the Government, while the other section was being led by Sir Edward Carson in strong opposition to the project. The cleavage in the ranks extended to the Division Lobbies when seventy-one Conservative Members supported Bonar Law and sixty followed the lead of Sir Edward Carson. Al-

though Mr. Bonar Law had thus secured the support of the majority of his Party, he realised that the defection of nearly half of his followers marked the writing on the wall, the sinister significance of which he was quick to decipher. With his acute sensitiveness to any development that affected his cherished position as the leader of the Conservative Party, he instantly set himself to repair the breach. To this end he conceived the urgent necessity of bringing Sir Edward Carson back into the Government, in a well-grounded belief that only by such means could he hope to make good the rift within the lute. He was fortunate enough to find an efficient instrument in the attainment of his purpose in Sir Max Aitken[1], who was a fellow-Canadian by birth and was linked to him by the closest ties of friendship. With consummate tact and skill, the intermediary brought together not only Bonar Law and Carson in the bonds of a renewed comradeship but also Lloyd George. In their common eagerness to see the War waged to a triumphant issue, reinforced, as it were, a feeling shared by the three of them, that the Government was not coping with the seriousness of the situation in as vigorous a fashion as it should, they had little difficulty in coming to a common conclusion that the situation demanded the supersession of a large Cabinet, with its inevitable lengthy discussions and its consequent delays in arriving at decisions, by a War Council, which should be limited in number and which would be free to concentrate its attention, day by day, exclusively on the very varying demands

[1]Now Lord Beaverbrook.

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of the situation. There was no intention, nor indeed even the desire, to supplant Asquith in the Premiership. Bonar Law made no secret of his firm conviction that Mr. Asquith's continuance as the head of the Government was absolutely essential to the preservation of national unity, while Lloyd George was genuine in his assurance that he had no desire to oust him from the Premiership. The first proposal which the three associates submitted to Mr. Asquith—on November 18th—took the form of a suggestion that he should consent to the formation of a War Council, which should consist of the three of them, under his supreme control as the Prime Minister. That proposal Asquith instantly rejected. A week later it was supplemented by a more comprehensive scheme under cover of a proposal that the Prime Minister should constitute a civilian general staff into a permanent War Council, which should consist of Ministers who would be unhampered by any Departmental duties and who would sit daily in the task of directing the War, in co-operation with the naval and military experts. It was further suggested that the Prime Minister should be the President of this Council with Lloyd George as its chairman, with the consequent right of presiding at its meetings in the absence of the Prime Minister. Mr. Asquith rejected this proposal also. On the first of December, Lloyd George, with the approval of his two associates, submitted to the Prime Minister a third plan that provided for the formation of a War Committee which should consist of the First Lord of the Admiralty,

the Secretary for War and a third Minister, who should be without a portfolio, one of whom should act as the chairman. This committee was to be under the supreme control of the Prime Minister, but was to have full powers to direct all questions connected with the War. The decisions of this Committee were to be invested with operative authority unless the Cabinet, on reference by the Prime Minister, reserved them.

XXV

PRIME MINISTER

force the issue to a definite decision. To this end he tendered his resignation. Hitherto he had been content, as often as he sought his own way, to threaten resignation, and the device had invariably succeeded in its purpose. With the memory of such triumphs, he confidently anticipated that the Prime Minister would again accede to his demand rather than risk the existence of his Ministry by losing its most popular figure.

At the outset, as the letters which passed between the two statesmen very clearly show, Asquith showed himself ready to accede to Lloyd George's demand for the creation of a War Committee, which should have full power to see that its decisions were carried out promptly and effectively by the Departments. But just when an effective accommodation seemed to be on the point of being effected, the situation was suddenly aggravated by a leading article in the *Times* newspaper, obviously based upon inspired information, in which, after a sardonic taunt at the swiftness of Mr. Asquith's "conversion" to the proposed arrangement, he was scornfully described as being "fitted better to preserve the amity of the nation than to force the pace of a War Council." It is not surprising that so sinister an interpretation of negotiations which were being privately conducted had the immediate effect of rousing his indignation, and he was anything but mollified by Lloyd George's declaration that "Northcliffe frankly wants a smash but I do not." The proverbial last straw which broke the camel's back had found its incidence in the article in the *Times*, with the re-

THE IMPERIAL WAR CABINET IN THE GARDEN AT 10 DOWNING STREET

sult that, before the day had run its course, he had informed Lloyd George that the King had given him authority to ask and to accept the resignation of all his colleagues in preparation for the formation of a new Ministry. "I start, therefore, with a new slate," he added, in a definite intimation that he had already arrived at the conclusion that the suggested War Committee could not be made effective without the presence of the Prime Minister as its chairman. Thus was the issue definitely raised between the two statesmen, and it needed no exercise of divination on Lloyd George's part to know that on "the new slate" which the Prime Minister purposed submitting to the King, his name would find no place. However, he had already anticipated the probable developments of the situation and had, with characteristic resource, prepared for them accordingly. To his surprise and disappointment, Mr. Asquith found himself unable to secure the continued attachment of the Conservative leaders, with the result that no course lay open to him other than to make way for Mr. Bonar Law; but, as Mr. Asquith and his Liberal colleagues were unwilling to serve under him, he, too, found himself unable to form a Ministry. With the failure of both Asquith and Bonar Law to accomplish the required task, the way was clear to the King to summon Lloyd George to the task. Without a moment's hesitation, he accepted the responsibility—undeterred by the manifold difficulties of the situation. As he afterwards claimed, in a review of the circumstances of his accession to the position, so far

from seeking the Premiership, he had expressed his readiness to serve under either Mr. Bonar Law or Mr. Balfour or "anybody else who would win the war." The statement was undisputably true. He accepted the Premiership, when it was proffered him by his Sovereign, as a solemn trust which he dare not, in the circumstances, refuse. After the fashion of the great Pitt, he had become obsessed with an all-absorbing presentiment that he could save Europe, and that he alone could do it. It was the intensity of that conviction that fired his soul and that impelled him to respond forthwith to the call in a heroic disregard of the stupendousness of the task which so perceptibly accompanied it.

It must be conceded that Lloyd George was extremely fortunate in the attendant circumstances of his assumption of the Premiership. His initial disadvantage in succeeding to the office without that traditional authority which each successive holder of the position had hitherto found in the full and ready adherence of his own party, was more than counter-balanced by his masterly stroke in attaching to himself the whole-hearted support of the leaders of both the Conservative and Labour Parties. This advantage was perceptibly enhanced by the acceptance of the Foreign Secretaryship by Mr. Balfour, whose commanding prestige could not but invest the new Ministry with lustre and with the assurance of public confidence.

Moreover, Lloyd George was able to gratify his long-cherished eagerness to secure afresh for the State the advantage of Sir Edward Carson's services.

Brief as had been the association of the two men in the first Coalition Ministry, Lloyd George had been quick to perceive the value of his characteristic qualities, notably his intuitive apprehension of the salient facts in a situation and his unyielding resoluteness in the pursuit of his main objective.

With the attainment of such advantages in the personnel of his ministry, the newly-appointed Premier proceeded to exercise his unchallengeable authority in the realisation of the most cherished of his projects. For many months he had marked, with unconcealed vexation, the debilitating effect of a large and unwieldy Cabinet, with its inevitable multiplicity of opinions and its consequent delays in arriving at vital decisions. His views on this matter were subsequently justified by the emphatic declaration in the First Report of the Dardanelles Commission, in its survey of the early circumstances of the War: "It must have been obvious from the first that the Cabinet was far too numerous to control effectively the conduct of the War," more especially by reason of the fact that many of the Ministers presided over Departments, which, in some cases, were very slightly, and, in others, were in no degree concerned with war-like operations. "It is to be regretted," added the Commission, "that this rudimentary fact was not recognised immediately after the outbreak of the War." It must be said to Lloyd George's credit that he was among the first to recognise the baneful effect of such a system in a time of national crisis, and that with his accession to the headship of the Government, he forthwith discarded it for a far smaller body,

which was charged exclusively with matters pertaining to the prosecution of the War. As he afterwards observed, in justification of such a step, the claim that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, was written for Oriental countries in peace times. "You cannot," he added, "run a war with a Sanhedrim." Hence his decision to make his Cabinet a body of five persons—"with one of them doing sentry outside, manning the walls and defending the Council Chamber, against attack, while we are trying to do our work inside."

Drastic as were the ruptures which he thus made with the treasured traditions and precedents of Cabinet government, they were hailed by the nation as a welcome earnest of his determination to win the war. As one of the acutest of observers justly recorded,[1] "Even if the faults of the new administration had been much more serious then they were, the change was still a change for the better. The nation at the end of 1916 was suffering the spiritual analogue of physical fatigue; and the change of Government acted like a brass band upon tired troops. The country simply wanted rousing, and there was no man better fitted than Mr. Lloyd George to administer the necessary stimulus."

Within a fortnight's time of his accession to the Premiership, he made his first speech, in his new rôle, on the floor of the House of Commons, when, as he justly deserved, he appeared "with the most terrible responsibility that can fall upon the shoulders of any living man, as the chief adviser of the Crown in the

[1]The late E. T. Raymond.

most gigantic war in which the country has ever been engaged—a war," he added, "upon the event of which its destiny depends."

As he proceeded to point out, the responsibilities of the new Government had been suddenly accentuated by a pacific declaration by the German Chancellor, in the Reichstag, which had been followed by a formal Peace Note to the Allied governments. While he readily agreed that any wanton prolongation of the conflict by any set of men would leave on their soul a crime that oceans could not cleanse, he at the same time stressed the consideration that the abandonment of the struggle, from any sense of weariness or despair, without achieving the high purpose for which it had been embarked upon, would mark the costliest act of poltroonery ever perpetrated by any statesman. For that reason he associated himself with Abraham Lincoln's memorable words in like circumstances: "I accepted this war for an object, and a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God, I hope that it will never end until that time." After stressing the fact that the German Note contained no definite proposals of peace, he pointed out that to enter into a conference at the invitation of Germany, without any knowledge of the proposals which she intended to make, would be "to put our heads into a noose with the rope end in the hands of Germany." He adopted the words used by his predecessor in the Premiership—as embodying the terms on which peace could only be made by the Allies with Germany—"Resti-

tution, reparation, guarantees against repetition." He concluded his speech with a striking passage in which the all-dominating issue of the struggle was most vividly envisaged. "This," he declared, "is a struggle for international right, international honour, international good faith—the channel along which peace, honour and goodwill must flow amongst men. The embankments laboriously built up by generations of men against barbarism have been broken, and had not the might of Britain passed into the breach, Europe would have been inundated with a flood of savagery and unbridled lust of power. The plain sense of fair play amongst nations, the growth of an international conscience, the protection of the weak against the stronger by the stronger, the consciousness that justice has a more powerful backing in this world than greed, the knowledge that any outrage upon fair dealing between nations, great or small, will meet with prompt and inevitable chastisement—these constitute the causeway along which humanity was progressing slowly to higher things. The triumph of Prussia would sweep it all away and leave mankind to struggle helpless in the morass. That is why, since this war began," he added in a personal reference which visibly stirred the emotions of the House, "I have known but one political aim. For that I have fought with a single eye: it is the rescue of mankind from the most overwhelming catastrophe that has ever yet menaced its well-being."

In a subsequent speech to his own constituents in the town of Carnavon, he described the new Govern-

ment as "in some respects an experiment." In its composition, success in business, he pointed out, had been placed on the same footing as success in politics, as a claim to high office. He pleaded for a fair chance for them in their onerous tasks of straightening out tangles, making up accumulated deficiencies and clearing up arrears. "A vast amount of work has to be done," he declared, "and is being done. That work will be continued. There was some bad work that will be scrapped. Where there was slack work, that will be energised, and where there was no work, it will be initiated." His utterance on that occasion was made memorable by another of those wonderful perorations in the use of which he is so consummate a master. "There are rare epochs in the history of the world," he proceeded to say in a tone attuned to the gravity of the situation, "when, in a few raging years, the character, the destiny of the whole race is determined for unknown ages. This is one. The winter wheat is being sown. It is better, it is surer, it is more beautiful in its harvest than when it is sown in the soft spring-time. There are many storms to pass through, there are many frosts to endure, before the land brings forth its green promise. But," he added, as his voice rang out in the most resonant of tones, "let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

With his accession to the Premiership, Lloyd George instantly and resolutely set himself to avail himself of his enhanced prestige and of his increased powers for a more vigorous prosecution of the War, in justification of the popular expectancy of an immediate and

even perceptible improvement in the military situation. For he regarded such an expectancy as absolutely justifiable. Already the conflict had been waged for nearly two and a half years, and during that period the British people had met with exemplary fortitude the ever-increasing demands which the State, under stress of sore necessity, had found itself compelled to impose upon them. They had borne burdens of taxation of an unprecedented magnitude; their hearths had been stripped of their men folk, while the women, in their eagerness to share in the travail of the nation's adversity, had heroically exchanged the common round of their domestic duties for the most exhausting of menial trades which had hitherto been regarded as exclusively "men's jobs."

In every sphere of the nation's life—in mansion and in cottage alike—personal liberty had been readily surrendered, privations endured without a murmur and the Shadow of Death accepted as the daily lot. The great mass of the people had willingly offered themselves—the young manhood for sacrifice in a hundred fields of battle, and the rest for enacting service in a thousand different ways. And in patience they had all possessed their souls. They had faced every vicissitude with an unyielding tenacity of purpose, in an unruffled confidence that victory would yet wait on their arms and the nation's security be finally secured. Moreover, this cherished faith in ultimate victory had been greatly quickened by the bold and extensive measures which the British Government had organised, under cover of the Munitions and Military Service Acts, in the

prosecution of the conflict. The British Expeditionary Force—which the Kaiser had contemptuously dubbed as "the contemptible little army"—had become multiplied a thousand fold, while the supplies of munitions had been increased to the full level of the Army's needs. For that reason Lloyd George readily realised that the British people had every reason to expect some substantial return from so gigantic an expenditure of resource and of energy and he was determined that no effort of his should be wanting to ensure the fulfilment of so natural and just an expectation. Sir William Robertson described him as "wanting a victory quickly, a victory while you wait." There was an element of truth in such a gibe. He was certainly bent on securing, in his own expressive phrase, "some variety in the character of the tragedy." As he remarked to a well-known war correspondent, shortly after his accession to the Premiership, he was "not prepared to accept the position of a butcher's boy driving cattle to the slaughter."

Shortly after his succession to the Premiership, he set out to Rome to attend an important Conference of the Allied Premiers and Generals. At that Conference the military situation on all European fronts was fully discussed and special consideration was given to the strategic necessities of the Italian frontier. The occasion afforded Lloyd George a fresh opportunity for reviving his earlier project for seeking an effective military demonstration on the Eastern frontier with the view of relieving the protracted stale-mate in the Western theatre. Emphasising the grave perils to which Italy was manifestly exposed, he

strongly urged, on the sound principle of carrying the war into the enemy's camp, an aggressive campaign across the Eastern Alps into the plains of Austria. Although he did not succeed in his effort to secure the assent of the Conference to so bold and daring a scheme, the assembled representatives of the Allied governments were made to feel the galvanic impact of his personality. They were quick to discern that in his elevation to the Premiership he had acquired enhanced prestige as Britain's leading spokesman, and also a marked dominance in the Councils of the Allies. He had, however, been at the helm of the British Government only a few brief weeks when there occurred an unforeseen disaster in the shape of the Russian Revolution, which had the immediate effect of frustrating all those high hopes of a decisive triumph in the field, with which he had so confidently embarked upon his exalted office.

Although he had, at the outset, hailed the Revolution as "undoubtedly beneficient and great," he was quick to realise that, as the result of so devastating an upheaval, the Russian Army would inevitably be devitalised as a fighting force for a considerable time. Already Italy was barely able to keep her foothold against the pressure of the Austrian troops and it was very manifest that France would be reduced to a state of exhaustion before the end of the year. The outlook was thus as black as it could possibly be. In his survey of the situation, in all its bearings upon the main issue, Lloyd George was absolutely convinced that the one hope for the Allies lay in the speedy intervention of America.

From the outset of the conflict, he had cherished the steadfast presentiment that, in a conflict in which the forces of democracy were so manifestly struggling with a military autocracy for the government of the world, the great Republic of the West would inevitably find itself constrained by all that it held dear to take its place alongside the Allies.

He was fortified in this belief by the attitude of the American Ambassador—Mr. Walter Page—"the friend of Britain in her sorest need"[1]—who made no secret of his all-consuming eagerness to see his country take its place in the throes of the combat. "We live in hope," the Ambassador had written to his son in the early stages of the conflict, "that the United States will come in, as the only chance to give us standing and influence when the re-organisation of the world must begin. I can see only one proper thing—that all the world should fall to and hunt this wild beast down"; while in a letter to Colonel House, President Wilson's chief confidant, he had not hesitated to declare that: "Looking at the thing in a long-range way, we are bound to get into the War."[2]

He fully shared Colonel House's firm conviction that, as the result of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the United States would be at war with Germany within a month. "The *Lusitania* is the turning point in our history," declared the Ambassador in a letter

[1] These are the words inscribed on the tablet placed in Westminster Abbey in commemoration of Mr. Page's services to Great Britain during the period of his Ambassadorship.

[2] "Life and Letters of Walter H. Page," by Burton J. Hendrick.

to the President, "and the time to act is *now*." But as the days lengthened into weeks, without any sign of any decisive action on the part of President Wilson, Page became restive. He deplored the President's phrase about America being "too proud to fight" as a tragedy and he bemoaned "the failure by action to live up to the level of the *Lusitania* Notes."

Although Lloyd George shared the bitterness of Page's disappointment over President Wilson's reluctance to translate his protests into armed action, he refused to give up hope that America would yet come in. In the month of February, 1916, leading British statesmen, like Asquith, Edward Grey and Lloyd George met Colonel House in a private conference in London for the purpose of considering the advisability of submitting to Germany an ultimatum in the choice of alternatives: either the conclusion of a peace satisfactory to the Allies or the entrance of the United States on the side of the Allies.

In face of the fact that the suggested ultimatum had been sanctioned by President Wilson, Lloyd George strongly supported it on the ground that it was of prime importance that the Allied Governments should keep in countenance with President Wilson, inasmuch as the world situation lay in his hands and he was in a position practically to dictate the terms of settlement. As nothing came of the suggested ultimatum, the British Government found itself compelled to continue the struggle, while Lloyd George continued to cherish his hope and belief that the great Republic would yet make common cause with the Allies.

Although Page continued to bemoan President Wilson's wavering course, which he ascribed to the fact that the President had not really understood the crucial issues of the War, the force of circumstances gradually drove the American President into decisive action. On the last day of January in 1917, the German Government officially informed the United States of its intention to embark forthwith upon an unrestricted submarine campaign, with the result that the German Ambassador at Washington was given his passports and all diplomatic relations with Germany were severed.

Even then President Wilson was loth to believe that the German Government would be so utterly rash as to carry out its threat. But the sinking of American ships, with the loss of life, compelled him before even the close of the month to seek authority from Congress to arm American merchant ships. "Looked at over a considerable period," wrote Page in his Journal, and in a reflective mood, "the President's course has progressed—slowly perhaps but steadily—from neutrality, hard and severe, to warning, to a break in diplomatic relations, to armed neutrality. Apparently," he added, "there is only one step more possible."

However, that step came sooner than Page, with his many disappointments, had dared to hope and it came from an absolutely unexpected quarter.

Towards the latter end of February (1917), the American Ambassador received an urgent message from Mr. Balfour in request that he should come at once to the Foreign Office. On his arrival there

he was handed by Mr. Balfour a copy of a cipher telegram which contained a message from the German Foreign Office to the German Minister in Mexico, instructing him to enter into secret negotiations with the President of the Mexican Republic with the view to an alliance for a joint German and Mexican invasion of the United States.

Faced by so sensational a document, the Ambassador forthwith cabled its contents to President Wilson, together with an explanation in proof of its authenticity, that early in the War, the British Government had been fortunate enough to obtain possession of the German cipher code which it had kept as a jealously guarded secret. "It is only divulged to you by the British Government," added Page, in his message, "in view of the extraordinary circumstances and their friendly feeling towards the United States."

The American President was naturally taken aback by so amazing a disclosure, but it was only after he had become satisfied, as the result of the fullest enquiries in regard to its genuineness, that he authorised its publication in the United States. As has been justly observed,[1] "the document, in its influence upon American policy, proved to be the most sensational that the European War brought forth."

The publication of the sensational telegram gave unconcealed gratification to both Lloyd George and Page for, as each assured the other, in face of so menacing a disclosure, President Wilson could no longer maintain his attitude of neutrality. Each of

[1] Mr. Burton J. Hendrick in "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page."

them had been confidently anticipating the entry of the United States into the conflict as the immediate result of the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany, and Lloyd George's disappointment was in no way assuaged when it was explained to him by Page that the delay in a formal declaration of a state of war with Germany was due to the fact that the President was hoping to wean Austria from her alliance with Germany and thus hasten the collapse of the latter. In one interview after another which he had with the British Prime Minister, Page, who approved of such a scheme, urged its advisability.

In the circumstances, Lloyd George could do nothing but wait upon events in an unabating hope that the increasing exigencies of the situation would yet bring the United States side by side with the Allies amid the smoke of the battle-field. With the publication of the German telegram, his anticipation was quickened afresh and its materialisation in accomplished fact was ensured when, a month later, President Wilson asked Congress to declare the existence of a state of war with Germany. In no breasts, on either side of the Atlantic, did the declaration, long deferred though it had been, stir so deep an emotion as it did in the case of the British Premier and the American Ambassador. For month after month, and year after year, the one had continued to hope for so all-determining an event, while the other had strenuously striven for its attainment in their common consciousness that, only by the entry of America into the combat, could the Allies hope to triumph in their grim and agonising resistance

to the terrorism of the mailed fist of military autocracy.

At long last the hopes of the one and the efforts of the other had found their consummation. The great Democracy of the West was in the struggle. In the fervour of his ecstacy Lloyd George hailed the decision as an event that gave "the final stamp and seal to the character of the conflict as a struggle against military autocracy throughout the world."

The tragedy of Russia's collapse had occurred in the middle of March (1917). Three weeks later, America had come into the fray. The loss of the one had been more than compensated by the gain in the other; for, unquestionably, the moral consequence of the active attachment of the United States to the side of the Allies proved the deciding factor in the final result.

While America was directing her attention to the necessary task of raising and equipping her armies for the ordeal of the battle-field, Lloyd George's spirits received a further fillip by the announcement of the appointment of General Nivelle as Commander-in-Chief of the French forces.

To his striking record of brilliant triumphs in the field, the French General added an unconcealed eagerness to force the static situation on the Western Front to a definite issue, for, as was remarked of him, "Nivelle was no military pettifogger, thinking in half inches on the large scale. There was in his plan no question of a few miles of trench. He proposed to get, with a hop, skip and jump, to Mons and Louvain, Bruges and Ghent and to burst into Germany itself."

He was therefore just the kind of military commander that Lloyd George had been seeking—the man who would get things done.

It is quite true that the French general's plan for a decisive victory on the Western Front was absolutely at variance with the theory, which Lloyd George himself had so persistently maintained, that the conditions of a rigid and an inexorable stale-mate on the trench-ridden soil of the West rendered impossible even the hope of a decisive victory, but Lloyd George was not the man to cling with stubborn obstinacy to any cherished theory if he saw even the chance of attaining the main objective in some other way. It was the end in view—not the means for its realisation—that concerned him. As he had observed after a melancholy survey of the meagreness of the returns which the Allies were reaping from their prodigious expenditure of resource and effort: "When we advance a kilometre into the enemy's lines, snatch a small shattered village out of his cruel grip, capture a few hundreds of his soldiers, we shout with unfeigned joy. But what," he added, "if we had advanced fifty kilometres beyond his lines and made 200,000 of his soldiers prisoners and taken 2,500 of his best guns, with enormous quantities of ammunition and stores? What print would we have for our headlines?" The observation revealed, as in a flash, the reflections that constantly possessed him. He longed for something infinitely greater in both their setting and their spectacular effect than the typical exploits—the advance of a kilometre or the capture of a shattered village—that had hitherto characterised the campaigns of the

Allies. He sighed for something big in the way of achievement, not so much for its spectacular effect, though that would mean no small thing in sustaining the morale of the Allied countries, as for its determining effect in hastening the gigantic conflict to its close. It was for that reason that he gave eager heed to General Nivelle's daring and even hazardous proposal for staking the issue on the Western Front, in an all-dominating attempt to break the German line and thus carry the war into the enemy's territory. But to Lloyd George's bitter disappointment, Nivelle failed to secure the assent of the French Government to his daring plan, on the ground that it was much too perilous to attempt. Shortly afterwards in consequence an outbreak of mutiny among his troops, the French General was relieved of his command.

This miscarriage of the confident hope of a dramatic triumph on the Western Front, with which the British Premier had hailed Nivelle's appointment to the French Command, was further aggravated by the appalling disaster which overwhelmed the Italian troops in their operations near Trieste when, as the result of a dashing attack by six German and seven Austrian divisions, they were driven into a retreat that turned into a rout, with the result that the Teutons succeeded in capturing a quarter of a million prisoners, 1,800 guns and vast quantities of munitions. They even penetrated into Italian territory and struck abject terror into the heart of the Italians both in the field and at home.

Lloyd George quickly marked the out-standing moral of the disaster and, with characteristic reso-

luteness, he set himself to turn it to practical account. For some time he had become convinced that the recurrence of the Allied disasters in the field was due, in no small measure, to the deplorable lack of combined action among the Allies. Early in the conflict the Kaiser had been reported to have said that he could best the Allies because they lacked the immense advantage of a unified command; while as far back as June, 1915, Mr. Winston Churchill had felt constrained to confess that "the lack of any real co-ordination in the exertions and plans of the Allies has been evident at every stage and this," he had added, "must be reckoned as one of the chief causes leading to the failure of the campaign of 1915."

Liaison officers had been appointed for the purpose of consultation with representatives of the Allied Governments and the leading staff officers of the Allied Armies, and a number of intermittent conferences had taken place, but these arrangements had manifestly proved inadequate for their primary purpose and unsatisfactory in their results. Consequently, Lloyd George had become increasingly convinced that nothing short of an all-dominating control, centred in one commanding officer who should, after the fashion of the German command, be made responsible for the strategic disposition of the whole range of operations in the field, would suffice to meet the paramount necessity of the situation. As he publicly observed, everybody realised the clamant need for unity of action, but no real attempt had been made to "pass from rhetoric to reality, from speech to strategy." The explanation was obvious. There were

considerations of national pride and of professional prestige among the military commanders which had effectively operated against any attempt to place the troops of one Allied country under the command of another and in no country had anyone felt sufficiently courageous to rupture long-established traditions.

However, with the Italian disaster and its manifest repercussion on the morale and prospects of the whole Allied front, Lloyd George brought himself to a resolute decision that the time had come to force the matter of a common Council for common action to a definite issue. For him the struggle represented one common front to the foe, which suffered no distinction. "All this talk about Easterness and Westerness," he exclaimed in an outburst of contemptuous impatience, "is balderdash. The field is north, south, east and west, and our business is to bring pressure upon the enemy from every point of the compass and inflict hurt upon him."

Convinced, even to the point of an obsession, that the fatal defect in the direction of the Allied forces on the various fronts lay in the lack of unity in the matter of both policy and organised effort, he resolutely set himself to make good the deficiency forthwith. He therefore decided to discard the improvised machinery which had been set up for providing occasional liaisons between leading Ministers of State in the Allied Governments and the various chiefs of staffs of the Allied Armies, as utterly inadequate for the task of promoting the necessary co-operation in policy and co-ordination in conflict, inasmuch as they had effected little more than just the appearance

of a unity of control. As he clearly discerned, there had been no authority responsible for co-ordinating the conduct of the War on all fronts, and, in the absence of such a central authority, each country had been left to its own devices. Convinced that the stern exigencies of the situation imperiously demanded a real, rather than a sham, unity, he set himself to substitute for "the cumbrous and clumsy machinery of conferences," a permanent council, whose duty it would be "to survey the whole field of military endeavour with a view to determining where and how the resources of the Allies could be most effectively employed." To this end he submitted to his colleagues in the Cabinet the draft of a number of proposals which represented the results of long and careful thought on his part. They were discussed by the Cabinet, "line by line," as he afterwards recalled, and, after full deliberation, they were endorsed without reservation of any kind. Armed with the document, he straightway set out for Rapallo, on the Italian Riviera, in order to lay the proposals before a conclave of Allied Premiers and of military chiefs, with a view to their adoption. Under the chastening influence of the Italian debacle, the assembled representatives showed themselves ready and even eager to agree to any proposals that sought to provide against the possibility of its recurrence, with the result that the British Premier found it unnecessary to use his strength in pushing an open door. From Rapallo he proceeded to Turin and Milan and his presence on Italian soil sent a perceptible thrill through the land. On the battle-field of Solferino he met the Italian King, and

he had the further satisfaction of seeing large contingents of both British and French troops hurrying Eastwards to the aid of their Italian ally in the day of direst need. "When we saw French soldiers pass on to defend the freedom which their fathers helped to win with their blood," he declared in a touching yet heartening tribute to the occasion, "and reflected on the sacrifices which France has made in this war for the freedom of mankind, I had a sob in my heart."

Still, although he had succeeded in his purpose of securing the endorsement of his proposals for the creation of an Allied Council, which should henceforth be responsible for the direction of the conflict along the whole line, he was much too shrewd a student of human nature to overlook the fact that emotions begotten of stern emergencies tend to evaporate when the pressure of the peril begins to relax. He knew that it was one thing to agree to proposals on paper, but quite another and an infinitely harder thing to ensure their effective implementation in resolute action. For that reason he deliberately set himself to stereotype the stern mood of the Rapallo Conference, in which his proposals had found favour. To this end, he decided to deliver a speech at Paris, on his way home, which, as he rightly calculated, would ensure a greater carrying power in the atmosphere of the French capital than it would on English soil. To that obvious advantage there would be added the further consideration, that, by thus taking the French public into his confidence, he would be materially quickening popular support for his cherished project and would thus be ensuring that pressure of public opinion which neither

statesmen nor soldiers would dare disregard. He was keenly sensible of the dangers involved in such a course—speaking, as he expressed it, with brutal frankness, at the risk of misconception, and even, as he readily confessed, at the further risk of encouraging the enemy—but so set was he on the implementation of the decision at Rapallo that he made up his mind "to take the risks."

The occasion took the form of a gathering in Paris, at which were gathered leading representatives of the French and other Allied Governments, for the purpose of formally setting up the Supreme Council. After stressing the fact that this Council would consist of "the leading Ministers of the Allied countries, who would be advised by some of their most distinguished soldiers," he proceeded to stress the fact that events of the war had demonstrated, in the most conclusive fashion, the pressing need for greater unity among the Allies in the control of the War. The unity, in point of strategy, which had hitherto existed, he scornfully stigmatised as "pure make-believe—a collection of completely independent schemes pieced together." "Stitching," he declared, "is not strategy. So it came to pass that, when these plans were worked out in the terrible realities of the war, the stitches came out and disintegration was complete."

He described the story of the War, from the standpoint of the Allies, as a serial of unrelieved misfortunes. "1915 was the year of tragedy for Serbia: 1916 was the year of tragedy for Rumania."

He stoutly maintained that if Europe had only been treated as one battle-field, at the time of the Russian

collapse, there would have been a change in strategy to counter the terrific pressure of so unforseen a disaster. "You will forgive me for talking quite plainly," he proceeded to say, with set sternness of visage and of voice, "because this is no time for concealing or for glossing over facts. War is pre-eminently a game where realities count. This is 1917. What has happened? I wish there had been some variety in the character of the tragedy. But there has been the same disaster due to the same cause. Russia collapsed. Italy was menaced. The business of Russia," he continued in a mocking tone, "is to look after her own front. It is the concern of Italy to look after her own war. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Disastrous! Fatal!" he ejaculated in tones that visibly awed his audience. "The Italian front," he continued, "is just as important to France and Britain as it was to Germany. Germany understood that in time. Unfortunately," he added in the saddest of undertones, "we did not."

He openly deplored "the inconceivable blunder" of leaving the south of Europe, with its gateway to the East, "to be held by the forces of a small country like Servia, with half the population of Belgium, its armies exhausted by the struggle of three wars and with two treacherous kings behind, lying in wait for an opportunity to knife it when it was engaged in defending itself against a mightier foe," and he readily associated himself with American opinion that the Italian disaster could not have taken place if one supreme military authority had directed the combined operations of the Allies with the sole aim of

victory without regard to any other considerations.

"National and professional traditions, prestige and susceptibilities, all conspired," he declared in an anguished tone of lamentation, "to render nugatory our best resolutions. The war," he added, "has been lengthened by sectionalism: it will be shortened only by solidarity." He even went the length of confessing that so perturbed had he become by the tragic course of events, in consequence of the lack of strategic unity among the Allies, that he had made up his mind that, unless some change were effected, he could no longer remain responsible for a war direction doomed to disaster for the lack of unity.

The vibratory effects of so sensational a speech proved to be more disturbing than even he had calculated. As was truly said, "it fluttered all the dovecotes of Europe and some of the eagles' nests as well." But in no country in Europe was the re-action to his frankness so speedy and so formidable as in his own, where his critics were ever ready and even eager to take advantage of any display of that impetuousness of speech which they had come to regard as the most pronounced of his temperamental weaknesses. Obviously he had on this occasion rioted in such freedom of utterance as would not have been permissible, under the exacting regulations for the censorship of the Press, to any newspaper in the land, and for that reason he had apparently delivered himself into the hands of such as were none too friendly to him. When, therefore, he returned to London, he found himself arraigned on the floor of the House of Commons on the ground that he had shown gross indiscretion in

his references to the military situation. So far, however, from displaying any sign of remorse or even of regret for his sensational statements, he proceeded forthwith to justify them. He led the House captive with the candour of his confession that he had deliberately made a disagreeable speech in order to rouse public opinion. As a matter of fact, the Paris speech, so far from being a sudden improvisation begotten of the occasion, as his critics were ready to believe, had been prepared with due deliberation and care. A copy of it had previously been dispatched to London for consideration by his colleagues in the Cabinet, and even for correction if they so desired, and there was nothing in the speech that had not already been set aforethought in the manuscript which had been handed to the interpreters. "I may know nothing about military strategy," he confessed to the House of Commons, as he proceeded to vindicate both the manner and the content of his challenged utterance, "but I do know something of political strategy. To get public opinion interested in a proposal, and to convince the public of the desirability of it, is an essential part of political strategy. That is why I did it. And it has done it," he triumphantly exclaimed, amid the acclamation of the House, with its quick discernment of the laudable motive which had inspired his utterance. And so it came about that his arraignment by his critics provided the occasion for one of the most striking of his personal triumphs. He left the arena that day amid the vociferous plaudits of the assembly—the proud hero of a memorable occasion.

XXVI

THE LAST YEAR OF THE WAR

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DESPITE his phenomenal personal triumphs in the parliamentary arena, the unfavourable developments both at home and in the wider area of Europe continued to give Lloyd George cause for increasing anxiety. The Russian Revolution, which he had acclaimed at its outset as "a welcome portent," had blighted his cherished anticipations, in the most tragic fashion, for the close of the year 1917 had witnessed the degeneration of the Revolution into stark Bolshevism with the consequent capitulation of Russia to the foe. It was not surprising in the circumstances that so deplorable a dénouement, with its manifest effect of enabling the enemy to divert his huge armies from the Eastern frontiers to a most formidable pressure on the Allied forces on the West, should re-act on the spirits of a section of the British people and infect them with a sense of the futility of continuing the struggle. The misgivings, which were thus being generated, found their articulation in the most unexpected quarter, in a letter which Lord Lansdowne addressed to the Press in which he strongly urged, on the ground that "some of our original desiderata have probably become unattainable," that the time had come when steps

should be taken to secure peace by negotiation. His eminence and prestige in the front rank of British statesmen—as the Minister of Foreign Affairs who had been responsible for the entente with France and the official leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Lords—naturally invested his plea with a special significance. But his declaration gained still greater weight by reason of the fact that it manifestly gave expression to feelings that were known to be latent in the breasts of an increasing section of the populace. With his instinctive intimacy of human psychology, Lloyd George quickly realised that, unless such misgivings were speedily and effectively disposed of, they would inevitably develop into such formidable proportions as seriously to affect, not merely the course, but even the issue of the conflict. Lord Lansdowne he could afford to ignore; but as he rightly divined, it would be perilous to discard that uneasiness in the public mind which Lord Lansdowne had so boldly set himself to express. For that reason he forthwith availed himself of the opportunity of public speech both to dispel the uneasiness, which Lord Lansdowne's plea had served to accentuate, and to brace up the nation's spirit to the necessary degree of heroic endurance. The danger, he declared in a speech which he delivered in the month of December, was not the pacifist but the man who thought that there was a half-way between victory and defeat. "We ought never to have started," he urged, "unless we meant, at all hazards, to complete our task." In vivid phrase and in challenging tone, he submitted the alternatives to the

consideration of the country—"The one way is to make easy terms with the triumphant outlaw, as men are driven to do in order to buy immunity in lands where there is no authority to enforce law. It means abasing ourselves in terror before lawlessness. It means, ultimately, a world intimidated by successful bandits. The other course is to go through with our divine task of vindicating justice, so as to establish a righteous and everlasting peace for ourselves and for our children. Surely," he exclaimed, "no nation with any regard for its interests, for its self-respect, for its honour, can hesitate for a moment in its choice. Victory is an essential condition for the security of a free world." At the same time he candidly confessed that, if he thought things would get no better, it would be infamous to prolong the war for it would be a black crime to force brave men to endure for one profitless hour the terrible conditions of the conflict because statesmen had not the courage to face the obliquy which would be involved in agreeing to an unsatisfactory peace. It was because he was firmly convinced, he assured his audience, that, despite discouraging appearances, that the Allies were making steady progress towards the goal which they had set in front of them in 1914, that he would regard peace overtures to Prussia, at the very moment when the Prussian military spirit was drunk with boastfulness, as a betrayal of the great trust with which he and his colleagues had been charged. In his natural eagerness to hearten the nation he emphasised the fact that the defection of Russia had been more than compensated for in the advent, into the arena, of America

than which, as he proudly averred, "there is no more powerful country in the world, with her gigantic resources and her indomitable people."

He immediately followed up this inspiriting message with another, alike in its purpose and in its bracing effect, to a large gathering of delegates of the various Trades Unions, in which he set himself to enunciate, with the utmost definiteness and clearness, the dominant aims of the Allies, in a well-grounded confidence that the most effective means for preventing the masses, who were manifestly bearing the brunt of the personal inconveniences, in the way of food rations and of curtailed liberties, from becoming affected by the plea for an immediate peace, was by enlightening their leaders on the main issue and thus ensure their continued co-operation in its pursuit. As he readily acknowledged when he met them, face to face, they were entitled to know for what cause men by the million were being called upon to suffer and to die, and vast populations were being subjected to the sufferings and privations of war on a scale unprecedented in the history of the world.

In the fulfilment of his self-appointed task of clearing away the misunderstandings, which were creeping like an intangible mist over the land, he proceeded to point out what the Allies were *not* fighting for. "We are not fighting," he declared, "a war of aggression against the German people. The destruction or disruption of Germany or the German people has never been a war aim with us from the first day of the war to this day. Most reluctantly, and indeed, quite unprepared for the dreadful ordeal,

MR. LLOYD GEORGE RIDING A HIGHLAND PONY, LED BY THE DUKE OF ATHOLL

MR. LLOYD GEORGE VISITING WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN HOSPITAL

we were forced to join in this war in self-defence, in defence of the violated public law of Europe, and in vindication of the most solemn treaty obligations on which the public system of Europe rested, and on which Germany had ruthlessly trampled in her invasion of Belgium. We had to join in the struggle or stand aside and see Europe go under and brute force triumph over public right and international justice. If we are asked what we are fighting for, we reply—as we have often replied—we are fighting for a just and a lasting peace, and we believe that before permanent peace can be hoped for, three conditions must be fulfilled:—

"First—the sanctity of treaties must be re-established.

"Secondly—a territorial settlement must be secured based on the right of self-determination, or the consent of the governed.

"And lastly—we must seek by the creation of some international organisation to limit the burden of armaments and so diminish the probability of war."

So clear and definite an enunciation of the determining aims of the Allies succeeded in its immediate purpose. The mists of misgiving, which had served to give Lord Lansdowne's letter startling and even sensational proportions, became dispelled, and, in the clear air of an enlightened public opinion, the considerations, which had led the country in the first instance to embark upon so hazardous a struggle, were seen afresh in their true perspective.

Three days after Lloyd George's speech to the Trades Union delegates, President Wilson issued his

memorable document with its fourteen points—a serial which elicited from Clemenceau, the French Premier, the cynical observation that "the good God had been content with only ten." In their main outlines, President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" amplified the policy which Lloyd George had already summarised in the three specified purposes which he had set out as the authentic aims of the Allies. With the removal of the danger of a diverted purpose, which Lord Lansdowne's letter had served to create, Lloyd George turned afresh to his cherished resolve of making the newly-created Supreme War Council at Versailles an effective instrument in the implementation of a strategic unity in the disposition of the Allied forces in the field.

To this end, he was bent on investing it with fresh and enlarged powers. He succeeded in his purpose with the result that early in the month of February (1918) it was officially announced that the Governments of the Allied countries had unanimously agreed to endow the Council with executive powers. The effect of such an enlargement of its earlier functions was self-evident. Henceforth the Council would be in a position to execute its own decisions, with regard to military operations on the Western line, without reference to the respective Governments for their assent. So drastic a change in the prescribed purpose of the Council instantly evoked criticism on the floor of the House of Commons, it was formulated in a trenchant speech by Mr. Asquith who pointed out that, while the original functions of the Council had been declared to be "advisable," they had now been

made "executive." Lloyd George refrained from entering into details, in defence of the change, on the ground that the information desired was such as any intelligence officer on the other side would gladly pay large sums of money to obtain. However, the criticism in Parliament was stifled only by the Premier's statement that the change had been effected with the approval of both Sir William Robertson and Sir Douglas Haig—the two chief figures in the British Army. But the lull in the situation was of short duration, for only five days later it was officially announced that Sir William Robertson had resigned his post as the Chief of Staff at the War Office. It soon transpired that the "resignation" was a virtual dismissal. He had been given the choice of either remaining at the War Office as the Chief of Staff, with curtailed powers, or of being the British Military Representative at the Versailles Council in the execution of functions which he regarded as the violation of the cherished traditions of the British Army.

He took strong exception to the Council on the ground that in its establishment "the real object of Ministers was not so much to provide effective unity of military command as to acquire for themselves a greater control over the military chiefs." As he could not, therefore, accept either of the proffered posts, except at the cost of his convictions, no course remained to him but to decline the choice and to consent to accept "the hum-drum obscurity of the Eastern command."

The truth is that the episode of the proffered posts was the occasion, rather than the cause, of his super-

session. For some time previously it had been increasingly evident to their associates that the two men, by reason of their fundamental differences of temperament and still more of ideas, in regard to their respective rôles, could not work "in double harness." The varying tenses of the one found no sympathetic adaptations in the dour and stubborn moods of the other. Moreover, these temperamental differences were seriously aggravated by the fact that each of them regarded the other as a trespasser on his own appointed lot. In the eyes of the one, the conduct of a war was "the soldier's job," which he should be free to pursue in accordance with the technique of his profession, without any interference on the part of the politician; while the other insisted that, as questions of far-reaching policy were involved in the issues of the battle-field, the responsible Ministers of State had every right to see and even to determine that the destiny of the nation should not be jeopardised by any rigid observance of cast-iron regulations on the part of the military experts who might, conceivably, in their obsession with the means of warfare, lose sight of its primary purpose.

However, while the British Premier was thus passing from one personal triumph to another, the enemy, in his fierce eagerness to precipitate the final issue of the conflict before the American Armies could complete their equipment for their transport across the Atlantic to the stricken battle-field, was busily occupied in the preparation, on an unprecedented scale, of a stupendous onslaught upon

the Western lines of the Allies. Troops were moved from the Eastern to the Western frontier. New tactics were devised and ammunitions were accumulated with a lavishness which provided for the sternest of emergencies. Early in the month of February, General Ludendorff was able to report to the Kaiser that the German Armies were fully equipped to undertake "the biggest task in history." The elaborate preparations came to a head in the offensive which the Germans launched on March 21st (1918) when there were hurled against the Western line, no less than ninety-seven divisions, sixty four of which were massed in an attack on the British Front between Arras and St. Quentin, which was held by only nineteen Divisions with thirteen in reserve. The attack, unprecedented in its weight, scale and power, and waged with an incredible fury, proved to be irresistible. Within the space of twenty-four hours the German legions had succeeded in breaking through on a front of nearly fifty miles. They had inflicted upon the Fifth Army under General Gough a crushing defeat, had forced the Third Army under General Byng to make a precipitate retreat, and they were rapidly approaching the strategic town of Amiens, the capture of which would inevitably mean a fatal severance between the British and French Armies, and probably the fall of Paris.

Once more the emergence of a crisis served to steel Lloyd George with the sternest of resolves and to equip him with an amazing resourcefulness. "I never remember in the whole course of the War a more anxious evening," Mr. Winston Churchill, has testified,

in recalling the evening which he spent with the Premier in the grim throes of the overwhelming anxiety begotten of the news of the disaster. "The resolution of the Prime Minister," he adds, "was unshaken under his truly awful responsibilities." In characteristic fashion he instantly set himself to take advantage of the chastening influence of adversity by pressing forward another of his cherished projects for the appointment of a generalissimo who should be entrusted with the oversight of the whole of the Western Front and be responsible for the strategic dispositions of the military forces. This was the main objective which he had in view when he pressed for the formation of the Supreme War Council, but, with his knowledge that such an appointment, which, as he knew, could not but go to a French officer, would serve to evoke strong and probably effective opposition from the heads of the British Army as a conspicuous and an unwarrantable affront to British prestige, he realised that he must needs proceed very warily in the pursuit of his purpose. Even in the speech which he made on the floor of the House of Commons, immediately after his memorable speech at Paris, in explanation of the functions and purpose of the newly-created Supreme War Council, he was at special pains to discount the idea of a Generalissimo for the Allied Armies. Such a system he declared to be unworkable, inasmuch as it would inevitably produce friction not only between the Armies, but also between nations and Governments. Such a declaration had served its purpose for the time being. It had sufficed to soothe the suspicions of Sir William

Robertson who, while ready to welcome the establishment of such a Council as "filling a much-felt want," would not hesitate to stir a hornet's nest if the Premier were to declare himself in favour of placing the British Army under the control of a foreign commander. In the troubled condition of the public mind, with its instinctive readiness to cry out, at a time of national peril, "Hands off the Soldiers," Lloyd George was much too shrewd to provoke a formidable combination of military opposition and of public distrust. Hence his disavowal on the floor of the House of Commons of any covert attempt at the appointment of an Allied Commander-in-chief. He was content to await with patience on events for the fruition of his cherished plan.

For that reason he deliberately masked the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.

However, in the devastating tragedy which was taking place on the Allied Front, he quickly discerned the pressing need, no less than the strategic opportunity, for implementing the project which he had come to regard as absolutely essential to that effective co-ordination of the Allied Armies, that could suffice to resist the fierce onslaughts of the enemy wherever and whenever they were made. His resolve to push forth his project was made immeasurably easier by the patriotic action of General Haig who, in a communication to the British War Office on March 24th, had urged that the only way to save the situation was to appoint one man to whom both he and the French Commander-in-Chief should be subordinate. To that end he suggested that a mem-

ber of the Cabinet should forthwith be sent to discuss with the French Government the advisability of appointing General Foch as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies. General Haig's suggestion was instantly acted upon with the result that Lord Milner left for Doullens, a small town six miles from Amiens, with a commission from the Cabinet to support the appointment of General Foch as the Allied Generalissimo. The memorable gathering of the representatives of the two countries, which met in the Mayor's office, around a narrow table in a great bare room, has been vividly described by an eye-witness of the occasion.[1] "M. Poincaré sat in the centre with the English Government, represented by Lord Milner, on his right and the French Government, represented by M. Clemenceau on his left. A little farther off, Sir Douglas Haig and Generals Foch and Pétain took their places. M. Loucheur sat at the end of the table and acted as secretary. In that solemn hour, each man maintained his usual expression. Poincaré was calm, Clemenceau caustic, Milner phlegmatic, Foch nervous and Pétain impenetrable, while Haig's face was drawn and harassed, like that of a man who had not slept for three nights." Later in the proceedings, according to the narrator, Lord Milner got up and beckoned to Clemenceau to join him in a corner of the room where there took place a brief whispered dialogue in which Lord Milner was overheard saying again and again as he nodded in the direction of General Foch, There is our man. Presently they were joined by General Haig who was heard to express his

[1]Stephen Lauzanne, Editor of *Le Matin*.

willingness to put himself under Foch's orders. Ultimately M. Clemenceau came back to the table where the other men had continued their discussion. In a loud voice he proposed to Petain to do as Haig had done and to put himself under Foch's orders. The Commander-in-chief of the French was no less patriotic than the Commander-in-chief of the British forces. He accepted the proposal on the spot. M. Loucheur took a sheet of paper and forthwith drew up the declaration, which was later made public, by the terms of which General Foch was given charge of co-ordinating the forces of the two Armies. "Since your handwriting is so good," said M. Clemenceau, "make two copies of this declaration. We will sign them right away."

"It is a hard task you offer me now," Foch is said to have remarked when the instrument of his appointment was thus completed, "a compromised situation, a crumbling front, an adverse battle in full progress. Nevertheless," he added in the calmest of tones, "I accept." And before the assembled group of statesmen and of military chiefs had left the room, he was hastening to give his first orders in his newly-appointed but extremely responsible rôle.

A well-informed student of the War, in all its varying phases and vicissitudes, has not hesitated to declare: "It will probably be the verdict of history that Mr. George's part in placing the Allied Armies under the control of one man—and that a great military genius—constitutes his highest claim on the gratitude of the British people, while his superiority to all pettifogging notions about national dignity

should give him an indefeasible title, whatever differences of view on other questions, to the respect and regard of the French. No less admirable than the constancy with which Mr. George clung to his conviction, was the courage with which he made use of every opportunity to give it effect. For it was no light task he was undertaking. He had to deal with a people exceptionally sensitive in such matters, a people capable of high generosity, but rather specially prone also to low and irrational suspicions, a people with no recent experience of great alliances, and with old memories in which their part was that of paymasters and dictators of policy."[1]

With the appointment of one Commander-in-chief for the whole of the Western Front, the last of the successive stages in Lloyd George's interpretation of the essential and all determining factor, for the attainment of victory by the Allies, may be said to have been reached. At the outset of the War, he was convinced that it was "the silver-bullet" that was destined to decide the ultimate issue. From the provision of money he had passed to that of munitions, as the most crucial need of the hard-pressed forces in the field. Then came the conviction that even an abundance of material resource would be of little avail unless there was a sufficiency of man power for its destined use. For that reason he was the first member of the British Cabinet to advocate military conscription, in a bold defiance of a tradition which had for many centuries held an unchallenged sway on British soil. Even after he had

[1]Mr. E. T. Raymond in his volume: "Mr. Lloyd George."

succeeded in forcing his colleagues to resort to its adoption and, as a result, to raise an army of no less than five million men, he was anything but satisfied, for he began to realise the futility of providing vast bodies of troops if their numerical strength was to be grievously impaired by the lack of that co-ordination of force and of effort among their Allies on the field of battle, which alone could ensure effective resistance to the enemy at the point of the gravest peril. He had become firmly convinced that nothing short of one Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces, with an unchallengeable authority to divert the component armies, without regard for their national distinctions, to the most perilous zones, as circumstances might determine, could meet the most vital and the all-dominating need of the situation. Hence his unconcealed gratification at the appointment of General Foch as the Allied Generalissimo. The last of his espoused projects had at last been realised and he was content to await on events for its justification.

"Why couldn't you have taken this step long ago?" Admiral Sims of the American Navy enquired of him, one evening, at a dinner at the American Embassy, towards the end of March, after listening to the British Premier expatiating on the tremendous advantage which would inevitably accrue to the Allied Armies as the result of General Foch's appointment. Like a flash came the reply: "If the Cabinet, only two weeks ago, had suggested placing the British Army under a foreign general, it would have instantly fallen."

The retort was as convincing as it was speedy. For many months Lloyd George had been content to possess his soul in patience, waiting, after the fashion of a skilful player at the chess-board, for the desired opportunity which would enable him to make the all-determining move.

However, while the representatives of the Allied Governments were thus engaged in re-arranging the command of their armies, the enemy was vigorously pursuing his advantage in the field. In the opening days of the month of April, the attack was renewed with unabating fury, when twenty German divisions, advancing towards Amiens, attempted to sever the British forces from the French. A few days later a fresh onslaught was made farther north, west of Lille, in a frenzied attempt to drive the British armies into the sea. In quick succession Armentieres fell, the Ridge of Messines was crossed and Baillene taken. The climax came with the capture of Kemmel Hill when the German Emperor surveyed the triumph of his troops with unalloyed gratification. The British troops were forced to retreat, but they continued to fight with indomitable pluck. "The line bent, but it did not break."

But the menace was by no means at an end. In the month of May the German offensive was renewed in the direction of Paris with such fury that the British and French armies were driven back across the Aisne and the Marne and the enemy advanced within thirty miles of Paris, with every hope, and indeed with every prospect, of its capture.

The pressure of the peril was seriously aggravated by its perceptible motive. Shortly after the adhesion

of America to the cause of the Allies, as an avowed belligerent, Lloyd George had with his characteristic aptitude for an arresting simile, depicted the situation as "a race between General Hindenburg and President Wilson in which the Germans were straining every muscle to reach the goal ere American help should be available for the Allies." Though, in his natural eagerness to hearten the British people with the assurance that "if Russia is out, America is coming in with both arms," he had been constrained to confess that the American Army was not yet ready, her equipment was not complete and her tonnage had not been built. The force of such a consideration was not lost upon Hindenburg and Ludendorff in their survey of the military situation, and they were resolved to take full advantage of their opportunity to force their pace in the race before America could succeed in getting into her stride. Hence the occasion and the unprecedented fury with which the German offensive had been launched upon the Western Front.

The Allied leaders set themseves to resist the devastating advance. Reserves were thrown into the gaping breaches, battalions were recalled from the East and hurried on to French soil, while the troops, which were being trained on English soil for home service and which consisted of youths in their teens, were, at the instigation of a grim necessity, hastily transported across the Channel to face legions which had become thoroughly seasoned to all the varying elements of warfare.

These lads fought with superb gallantry, but the weight and force of the enemy's offensive was more

than they could, in the circumstances, cope with. It was very manifest that still further and fuller measures of help were urgently necessary if the enemy's devastating progress was to be brought to a standstill. Under stress of his terrible anxiety, in face of so desperate a situation, Lloyd George wistfully bethought of the great masses of American troops who, in the full flush of their virginal vigour, were being trained on the other side of the Atlantic. He was quick to discern that if only they could be forthwith brought across the sea, the grim pressure of the enemy would be relieved and the situation saved. In the presence of danger, even the most cherished of conventions are set aside. And so, in heedless disregard of the diplomatic usages that governed the approach of one sovereign State by another, Lloyd George cabled to Lord Reading, who was acting as the British Ambassador in Washington at the time, to inform the President personally of the desperate plight of the Allied Armies and to appeal to him to despatch forthwith to the battlefield all possible reinforcements. Lord Reading lost no time in carrying out the instructions. In words that were vibrant with urgency he set out before the President the terrible gravity of the military situation, but when he was about to re-inforce the grimness of his narrative with a strong appeal for immediate help on the part of the United States, he was instantly stopped by the President who exclaimed, in a tone that was resonant with resolution: "Mr. Ambassador, you need say no more. I will do my damnedest." Forthwith he undertook to dis-

patch all the troops available and he readily assented to their being brigaded with the British and French forces in order that they might replace the exhausted battalions in the urgent task of resisting the onslaught of the foe. The readiness with which the President had agreed to the dispatch of the American forces found its effective counterpart in the risk which Lloyd George readily incurred by diverting British shipping from home purposes to the transport of the American troops.

"I shall never forget that morning," he subsequently declared, as he recalled the occasion, "when I sent a cable to President Wilson telling him what the facts were and how it was essential that we should get American help at the speediest possible rate, inviting him to send 120,000 infantrymen and machine-gunners per month to Europe and if he did that, we would do our best to help to carry them. I sent that telegram across to Lord Reading and the following day came a telegram from President Wilson: 'Send your ships across and we will send the 120,000 men.' Then I invited the Shipping Controller to 10, Downing Street, and said: 'Send every ship you can.' They were all out engaged in essential trades, because we were cut down to the bone. There was nothing that was not essential. We said: 'This is the time for taking risks.' We ran risks with our food; we ran risks with essential raw materials. We said: 'The thing to do is to get these men across at all hazards.' America sent 1,900,000 men across and out of that number 1,100,000 were carried by the British Mercantile Marine." Every one of the ships was over-

crowded to the point of insufferable congestion, but the physical discomfort was willingly and even cheerfully borne by the men in their eagerness to reach the stricken fields "to beat the Boche." Their arrival at Liverpool and in London sent a thrill of joy and of quickened confidence among the crowds that lined the streets to welcome them, while their subsequent presence in the Allied ranks instantly resulted in an incalculable re-inforcement of the morale of the troops that had been so ruthlessly battered by the enemy's onslaught and in a corresponding measure of dejection on the part of the foe. In a message which he despatched to President Wilson, the American Ambassador referred with unrestrained enthusiasm to "the universal admiration and wonder in England at the American energy and earnestness in getting into the war which has no parallel."

The effect of the American re-inforcements was soon made evident in the dramatic turn in the fortunes of the Allies. Although the German legions continued their assaults, it was very manifest that they had lost their advantage. In the month of July, Foch shattered the right wing of the phalanx which the Germans were pushing forward in the direction of Paris and he followed up this triumph by a vigorous onslaught—on the 8th of August—in which both British and French troops, re-inforced by their American increments, were engaged, on the German lines, east of Amiens, with the most devastating effect. "The eighth of August," as Ludendorff afterwards confessed, "was the black day of the German Army in the history of this war. The eighth of August opened

the eyes of the staff of both sides. The Emperor told me later on, that after the failure of the July offensive and after August the 8th he knew the War could be no longer won."

The advent of the American contingents had turned the scales in favour of the Allies, and the commanders of the German Armies required not to be told that each succeeding day from that time onwards would mark an increasing preponderance in numbers and in advantages for the Allies. Bad as was the eventful result of the 8th of August, the events that took place on the Bulgarian front from the middle of September onwards were even more fateful in their consequences on the Quadruple Alliance; for before the month had run its course Bulgaria had been driven to an ignominious surrender, and it became very evident that it was only a matter of days before both the Austrian and the Turkish empires would be reduced to the same fate.

XXVII

THE ARMISTICE—RÉSUMÉ

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CONFRONTED by the grim spectre of impending calamity, the German Government dispatched, in the early days of October, an urgent request to President Wilson to invite all the belligerents forthwith to enter into peace negotiations upon the basis of the Fourteen Points, as set out in his memorable address to Congress and to conclude an Armistice. In face of such a request, it became a matter of fundamental importance, if fatal misunderstandings were to be avoided, that these should be on the part of the Allies, no less than that of the Central Powers, a very clear and definite interpretation of these basic "Points." For that reason President Wilson deemed it advisable to send Colonel House to Paris as his "personal representative" for the purpose of conferring with the members of the Supreme War Council in regard to the implications of the Fourteen Points, with the view of coming to a common agreement which could be made the basis of the conditions for the desired Armistice. At this private Conference, which was attended by the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France and Italy, Colonel House readily admitted, in reply to an enquiry by Lloyd George, that, if the Allies agreed to an Armistice based upon

the Fourteen Points, they would thereby be binding themselves to the acceptance of all the Points with their consequent obligations. Thereupon Lloyd George openly declared that he could not, under any conditions, agree to the second of the Points with its insistence on the absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas. Such an undertaking, he urged, would mean that the power of blockade would be lost. Germany, he pointed out, had been broken almost as much from the effects of the blockade of her coasts by the British Navy as from that of the military operations in the field. However, he expressed his readiness to see the matter referred to the consideration of the projected League of Nations, but he refused to agree to its acceptance in the meantime as one of the bases of an Armistice. When Colonel House found Lloyd George unyielding on this issue, he replied rather testily that no course would be left to the President but to inform the German Government that his Points were not acceptable to the Allies. The question would then arise, Colonel House proceeded to add, with a significance which could not be missed by the assembled group, whether America would not of her own accord deem it advisable to take up these issues with Germany and Austria. In his eagerness to constrain the Conference to accept all the Points, House even went so far as to suggest that the matter might eventuate in a separate Peace between the United States and the Germanic Powers. Although that covert threat had, as House subsequently informed the President, "an exciting effect," it left Lloyd George quite unmoved.

"If," he proceeded to observe in reply, "the United States were to make a separate peace, we would be very sorry but we could not give up the right of blockade—the power which has enabled us to live. As far as the British public is concerned, we will fight on, for to give up the right of using the Fleet," he added, "is a thing that no one in England would consent to."

"I cannot understand this doctrine of the Freedom of the Seas," interjected Clemenceau. "War could not be War," he added, "if there was freedom of the seas."[1]

As neither Lloyd George nor House would yield on the issue, the Conference adjourned in a state of tension and there was every indication that it was doomed to be abortive. However, when the discussion was resumed a week later, the tension had perceptibly waned. Although President Wilson had, in the meantime, authorised House to inform the Allied Premiers that he could not consent to take part in negotiations of a peace which did not include the Freedom of the Seas, the Colonel had deemed it prudent, in the interests of a common agreement, to secure from the President a special message in which he sought to invest his cherished formula of the Freedom of the Seas with an interpretation which was calculated to mitigate Lloyd George's objections. "The President," ran the message, "says that he freely and sympathetically recognises the necessity for the British and their position with regard to the seas both at home and throughout the Empire.

[1] "The Intimate Papers of Colonel House."

Freedom of the Seas, he realises, is a question upon which there should be the freest discussion and the most liberal exchange of views." On the strength of so conciliatory a message, Colonel House pressed the British Premier to accept the principle that underlay the formula.

This he firmly declined to do on the ground that the phrase had come to be associated with the idea of the abandonment of the blockade. "Were I to accept," he declared, "it would only mean that in a week's time a new Prime Minister would be here who would say that he could not accept the principle. The English people will not look at it. On this point they are absolutely solid. Consequently it is of no use for me to say that I can accept the principle when I know that I shall not be speaking for the British nation."

When Colonel House found that the British Premier was absolutely adamant in his attitude, he modified his earlier request by suggesting that the assembled representatives of the Allies should agree that the matter was one that should be duly brought up for discussion at some later date. To that suggestion Lloyd George readily agreed and in compliance with a further suggestion from Colonel House, he wrote a letter which was to be despatched to the President. "The Allied Governments," declared this communication, "have given careful consideration to the correspondence which has passed between the President of the United States and the German Government. Subject to qualifications, they declare their willingness to make peace with the Government

of Germany on the terms of peace laid down in the President's address to Congress in January 1918, and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent addresses. They must point out, however, that Clause Two, relating to what is described as 'the Freedom of the Seas' is open to various interpretations, some of which they could not accept. They must therefore reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject when they enter the Peace Conference."

In view of the fact that Lloyd George, the advantage of whose dominant influence in the Councils of the Allies was actually desired, was willing to support Wilson's Points, apart from the clause in regard to the Freedom of the Seas, House strongly advised the President to accept the memorandum "without alteration," especially as it secured all that was possible in the circumstances. This was done and as a result the Allies were able to take this stand upon a common agreement in regard to the prescribed conditions of an Armistice.

In the meantime the doom of Germany was being developed with dramatic swiftness. On the 4th of November, the German Government ordered the German Fleet to set out from the Kiel Canal in a defiant challenge to the British Navy. But the order served only to precipitate a mutiny among the crews. Within two days the revolt at Kiel had developed into a revolution which swept the Fatherland like a prairie fire. Faced by such a spectre, the Kaiser, on the seventh day of November, fled in panic across the borders into Holland—a fugitive

from his own people—while on the following day, Prince Max was succeeded in the Chancellorship by Herr Ebert—a plebeian who came into the traditional place of power, riding on the whirlwind of the Revolution.

When it thus became evident that the military strength of Germany had become absolutely spent and that consequently no course lay open to her other than to seek an immediate armistice, Lloyd George hurried over to Versailles, in his eagerness to ensure that the Allied Council should not, in the flush of so joyous a triumph, mishandle the strategic advantage of the situation.

"It was a remarkable week," he declared, on his return to London, as he retailed his impressions of so memorable and momentous an occasion. "Walking through the beautiful forests of Versailles," he continued, "the leaves were falling, and these were not alone. Empires and kingdoms, and kings and crowns were falling like withered leaves before a gale." He dwelt upon the contrast between the spring and the fall of the leaf, in illustration of the revolutionary change which had taken place in the situation. In the spring the enemy was everywhere triumphant, but the fall of the year was witnessing the annihilation of the Turkish Armies; Bulgaria's treacherous king a fugitive; Austria, no longer entrenched on Italian soil, but shattered and broken; while Germany, the last and greatest of foes, hurled back, with an Army, which was once the most formidable in the world, so shrunk as hardly to be an Army at all. "I have waited for this hour," he proceeded to say in a quiet

yet triumphant tone, after pointing out how "the opening up of the flank" first of Bulgaria, then of Turkey and finally of Austria, had resulted in ripping the most vulnerable flank of Germany.

"I have been supposed to have been advocating little side-shows which frittered away the strength of this country upon unhelpful enterprises. You know why now. We wanted to get round by the back door to Germany. It helped those who were battering at the front door."

Two days later, the eagerly-expected event took place in Germany's complete capitulation to the conditions laid down by the Allies for the desired Armistice. The significance of the event sent its thrill around the whole globe. In a conflict, which had been world-wide in its range, the last shot had been fired and the aggressors had not only been beaten but broken beyond all hope either of redemption or of recovery.

"You have done more than any one man in the world to win this war," declared Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, in a letter to Lloyd George, on the conclusion of the hostilities. The tribute was as authentic as it was remarkable for, in his official capacity, as the Chief of the British Staff, the distinguished soldier had had an unrivalled opportunity for gauging both the range and the force of Lloyd George's myriad and unceasing activities in the task of ensuring so triumphant a consummation. Hence the fervour of his homage. But the tribute was well within the boundary of demonstrable fact, as the

record of Lloyd George's services so clearly establishes.

He had devised Budgets for raising taxes in material sustenance of the Allied Armies, to an extent that had hitherto been absolutely unprecedented in British history. He had addressed himself to the still more urgent task of providing them with the munitions of war. He had not only succeeded in enlisting the resources of the nation, in both brain and brawn, in the processes of the required production, but he had co-ordinated the multifarious activities in an organised scheme for an increased output and for a speedy supply. He had literally dotted the landscape with huge munition factories and the whole land had become audibly vibrant with the pulsations of their vast masses of complicated machinery. It was he who had forced upon the British Cabinet the policy of military conscription and had thereby ensured such a supply of man-power for the British Army as enabled it to repair the enormous wastage which was inevitably involved in so wide and terrific a conflict, and it was he who had accomplished the even sterner task of compelling the military chiefs of the British forces to agree to the appointment of an Allied Commander-in-Chief and thus secure for the Allies that vitalising consolidation of force and that supreme advantage of strategic unity which the Allied Armies had so long and so woefully lacked. Moreover, in his all-dominating eagerness to win the War, he had set himself, regardless of all considerations either of professional etiquette or of established tradition, to make a close study of the ordnance maps, and

had drafted memoranda, which, with their startling suggestions and their definitely formulated schemes, for strategic dispositions in the field, openly challenged the military experts on their own ground. As Mr. Winston Churchill,[1] from the fulness of his intimate knowledge, has testified, in a just tribute to Lloyd George's remarkable record of achievement during the struggle, "he possessed two characteristics, which were in harmony with the period of convulsion. First, a power of living in the present, without taking short views. Every day for him was filled with the hope and the impulse of a fresh beginning. He surveyed the problems of each morning with an eye unobstructed by preconceived notions, past utterances, or previous disappointments and defeats. In times of peace such a mood is not always admirable nor often successful for long. But in the intense crisis when the world was a kaleidoscope, when, every month, all the values and relations were changed by some prodigious event and its measureless reactions, this inexhaustible mental agility, guided by the main purpose of Victory, was a rare advantage. His intuition fitted the crisis better than the logical reasoning of more rigid minds. The quality of living in the present and starting afresh each day led directly to a second and invaluable aptitude. Mr. Lloyd George in this period seemed to have a peculiar power of drawing from misfortune itself the means of future success. From the U-boat depredations he obtained the convoy system: out of the disaster of Caporetto he extracted the Supreme War Council; from the

[1] In "The World Crisis, 1916-1918."

catastrophe of the 21st of March he drew the Unified Command and the immense American reinforcement."

He had not been content to wait upon events in the hope that they might yield some promise of comfort. On the contrary he grappled with them even to the point of wresting from them some determining advantage. In the further words of his colleague, "He lived solely for his work and was never oppressed by it. He gave every decision when it was required. He scarcely ever seemed to bend under the burden."

In illustration of the force of so striking a tribute, reference may be made to a story told by one of his personal associates,[1] in reminiscence of that dark and fateful period in the spring of 1918, when the German offensive was in full spate and when both the British and French armies were being ruthlessly driven back towards the French coast. A small group of officials were scanning, with unconcealed anxiety, one of the large scale maps in the hall at 10, Downing Street. Presently there was the sound of a step behind them. The Prime Minister had joined them in a close and concentrated gaze upon the map. "Serious?" he murmured in repetition of the expression uttered by one of the group. "Yes, it certainly is, but by no means desperate," he quickly added. "Look here," he exclaimed, as he pointed, on the map, to the north of Calais—"we can flood the whole of that area if necessary. Then, if they drive us south of Calais, we can still hold on. France is a large place, and it has many ports. Retire from

[1]The late Mr. Harold Spender.

France?" he ejaculated, in an instant reply to an enquiry. "No, certainly not," he added in the most resolute of tones, "we will stand by our Allies to the last."

The declaration was significant of the man and of his spirit. So far from daunting him, the vicissitudes of the conflict had served only to brace him to fiercer determination and to greater effort. He had become the visible incarnation of Britain's resolve to see the struggle through to Victory, whatever happened—the personification of its relentless purpose and the instrument of its accomplishment.

For that reason there was no resource which he had not brought to bear upon the course of the struggle—no device that he had left untried and no responsibility that he had not readily shouldered.

But true as all this is, it is by no means the whole story; for, when the record of his many remarkable contributions to the cause of the Allies comes under review, it is very clear that even his unique services, in equipping the Armies in the field to the point of an efficiency which carried with it both the promise and the potency of victory, were of secondary value in comparison with the unique and incalculable services which he rendered the British people at home by his public utterances, in his unceasing purpose of maintaining their spirit at the level of a resolute endurance. It is not too much to claim that, in the setting of their circumstance, with their vivid envisagement of the crucial issues of a conflict in which the nation's destiny was at stake, in the fervour of their dramatic appeal, and in their electric

effect on the populace, the speeches, which Lloyd George delivered during the course of the War, can be justly likened to the memorable orations of Demosthenes, when he was urging his countrymen to resist, even at the point of the sword, the Macedonian tyrant.

With his intuitive insight into the psychology of the masses, Lloyd George was quick to realise that in a conflict which entailed unparalleled sacrifices not only on the part of the men in the field, amid the horrors and the perils of the trenches, but also on that of their kinsfolk at home, subjected as they were to irksome regulations which did violence to their long-cherished rights of personal liberty, there was the constant danger that, under the continued strain of so iron a regime, their patience might become exhausted and this endurance impaired.

An anthology of his inspiring appeals during the course of the War would require the dimensions of a volume, but the following selections can be taken as typical examples of his superb skilfulness in envisaging, with an arresting vividness, the momentous issues which the struggle involved.

"There is a time in every prolonged and fierce war, in the passion and rage of the conflict, when men forget the higher purpose with which they entered it. This is a struggle for international right, international honour, international good faith—the channel along which peace honour and goodwill must flow amongst men. The embankments laboriously built up by generations of men against barbarism

have been broken, and had not the might of Britain passed into the breach, Europe would have been inundated with a flood of savagery and unbridled lust of power. The plain sense of fair play amongst nations—the growth of an international conscience, the protection of the weak against the strong by the stronger, the consciousness that justice has a more powerful backing in the world than greed, the knowledge that any outrage upon fair dealing between nations, great or small, will meet with prompt and inevitable chastisement—these constitute the causeway along which humanity was progressing slowly to higher things. The triumph of Prussia would sweep it all away and leave mankind to struggle helpless in the morass. That is why, since this War began, I have known but one political aim. For that I have fought with a single eye. It is the rescue of mankind from the most overwhelming catastrophe that has ever yet menaced its well-being."

"I do not know what the National Debt will be at the end of this War, but I will make this prediction. Whatever it is, what is added in real assets to the real riches of the nation will be infinitely greater than any debt we shall ever acquire. The resources of the nation in every direction will have been developed, directed, perfected, the nation itself disciplined, braced up, quickened."

"The world will be able, when the war is over, to attend to its own business. There will be no war or rumours of war to disturb and to distract it. We

can build up, we can reconstruct; we can till and cultivate and enrich; and the burden of terror and waste of war will have gone. The best security for peace will be that nations will band themselves together to punish the first peace-breaker. In the armouries of Europe every weapon will be a sword of justice. In the government of men every army will be the constabulary of peace. There were men who hoped to see this achieved in the days of peace. We were disappointed. It was ordained that we should not reach that golden era except along a path which itself was paved with gold; yea, and cemented with valiant blood. There are myriads who have given the latter, and there are myriads more ready for the sacrifice if their country needs it. It is for us to contribute the former. Let no man and no woman, in this crisis of their nation's fate, through indolence, greed, avarice or selfishness, fail. And if they do their part, then, when the time comes for the triumphal march through the darkness and the terror of night into the bright dawn of the morning of the new age, they will each feel that they have their share in it."

"There are rare epochs in the history of the world when in a few raging years the character, the destiny of the whole race is determined for unknown ages. This is one. The winter wheat is being sown. It is better, it is surer, it is more beautiful in its harvest than when it is sown in the soft spring-time. There are many storms to pass through, there are many frosts to endure, before the land brings forth its

green promise. But let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

"We are faced with the greatest and the grimmest struggle of all. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, not amongst men but amongst nations, great and small, powerful and weak, exalted and humble, Germany and Belgium, Austria and Serbia, equality, fraternity, amongst peoples as well as amongst men—that is the challenge which has been thrown to us. Europe is again drenched with the blood of its bravest and its best. But, do not forget, these are the great successions of hallowed causes: they are the Stations of the Cross on the road to the emancipation of mankind. Let us endure as our fathers did. Every birth is an agony, and the new world is born out of the agony of the old world. My appeal to the people of this country, and, if my appeal can reach beyond it, is this—that we should continue to fight for the great goal of international right and international justice so that never again shall brute force sit on the throne of justice nor barbaric strength wield the sceptre of right."

"War is a ghastly thing, but not as grim as a bad peace. There is an end to the most horrible war, but a bad peace goes on and on, staggering from one war to another. Already the Prussian war lords are talking of 'the next time.' Next time! There must be no next time! Far better in spite of all the cost, all the sorrow, and all the tragedy of it—let us have done with it. Do not let us repeat this horror! Let us be the generation that manfully, cou-

rageously, resolutely eliminated war from among the tragedies of human life. Let us, at any rate, make victory so complete, that national liberty, whether for great nations or small nations, can never be challenged."

The inspirational value of such utterances, with their impassioned note of thrilling appeal, is self-evident, and it is not surprising that their psychological effect was as decisive as it was instantaneous. They manifestly steadied the nation's nerves under the recurring shocks of disaster and braced the nation's heart for the ordeal of a still greater endurance.

Indeed, it is not too much to say that Lloyd George's greatest service to his own country, and consequently his greatest contribution to the ultimate victory of the Allies, is to be found, not so much in his all-consuming energy or in his amazing adaptation of means to the desired ends, in the material equipment of the British forces, as in his supreme gift of heartening appeal whereby he persistently maintained the home population at the highest pitch of heroic endurance. It was he who had kept the sacrificial fires on the home altar burning with an unabating intensity. It was he who had saved the morale of the British people from becoming corroded with disaffection or from becoming disheartened by the vicissitudes of the protracted struggle. It is not without significance that when, after the overwhelming collapse of Germany, Ludendorff came to review its main and fatal cause, he found it, not in any defection among the forces in the field, but rather in the

tragic loss of morale on the part of the German people at home. He readily accounted for it on the ground that they had not been fortunate enough to possess "a man like Lloyd George" who could have sustained their spirit of resistance even in the darkest hour.

It is interesting to recall that, at the time when the Allied Armies were being driven back with terrific losses and when it seemed as though nothing could possibly bar the triumphant offensive of the foe, Lloyd George confided in a friend that, if the Allies finally succumbed, no course would remain open to him other than to jump from one of the parapets of Westminster Bridge. The observation, uttered in a passing spasm of dejection, served to illustrate the absolute thoroughness with which he had become identified with the cause and interests of his country, for as he strongly felt, apart from the safety of his own people, there could be no future for him. His career would inevitably be closed in the gloom of an irretrievable tragedy. Happily, so dire a contemplation proved unjustifiable, for Armistice Day found him, not on Westminster Bridge in process of self-immolation, but in his place in the House of Commons where he was joyously acclaimed by all Parties as one who was in a large, and even a determining, measure responsible for so dramatic and overwhelming a triumph. He had indeed saved the State.

And on the day after the Armistice, when the most representative men of Britain were assembled at the Guildhall, in the metropolis of the Empire,

in celebration of so overwhelming a triumph, Lloyd George found himself the one hero of the occasion. As the rafters of the historic building reverberated again and again, as the assembled company shouted themselves hoarse in acclamation of his triumphant leadership, the veteran Archbishop of Canterbury, recalling the savage abuse with which, in the years preceding the War, Lloyd George was persistently assailed by his political opponents, turned to Mr. Balfour, who was by his side, with the whispered enquiry: "What would you have said if, ten years ago, you had been told that he would be accorded so wonderful a reception here in the City?" "It would indeed have been thought incredible," was Mr. Balfour's quick reply, "but," he added with the most gratifying of smiles, "the little beggar deserves it all."

XXVIII

THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

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MANIFESTLY, with the collapse of Germany and the consequent cessation of the conflict, considerations of urgency should have led the Allied statesmen, while the penitence of the vanquished foe was still plastic to the touch, to expedite the arrangements for convening the necessary Conference for the purpose of formulating the Peace Treaty. Unfortunately, the Allied statesmen, with their highly-developed sensitiveness to popular sentiment, could not resist so unique and tempting an opportunity for "taking their profit," with the result that they seized it with an unconcealed avidity. And none of them more so than Lloyd George. With that expert skill in political strategy, which he had openly vaunted, he instantly set himself to reap the full measure of the advantage of the situation. He remembered how woefully Lord Beaconsfield had missed his strategic opportunity when, on the occasion of his triumphant return from the Conference of Berlin, he had refrained from making an appeal to the country while his praise was still on all men's lips. Neglecting to strike the iron of popular favour while it was perceptibly hot, Beaconsfield discovered to his chagrin, when, two years later, he sought to strike it,

that, as the result of the delay, the iron had become too cold to be wrought to the desired end. Mindful of the blunder of one of the astutest of his predecessors, Lloyd George resolved forthwith to turn to full advantage the reactions of popular emotion to the situation.

"Gratitude," he declared on one occasion, "is like manna—it must be gathered and enjoyed quickly, for its freshness soon disappears." And so he set himself to gather "the manna" which was then falling in every part of the land in unprecedented measure. Accordingly he diverted his gaze from the blood-sodden fields of Europe to the hustings of his own country. The statesman temporarily relapsed into the politician with the result that the all-consuming energy, which he had been devoting to the prosecution of the War, was switched to the manœuvres of the political arena. He traversed the country in his task of appealing to the electorate for so authoritative a mandate as would enable him to ensure at the Peace Conference the fullest measure of the fruits of victory.

In a series of speeches, which gave full and forcible articulation to the popular feeling, he summarised the policy of British Government in the threefold demand for the trial of the Kaiser, the punishment of those who had been guilty of atrocities and the fullest indemnities from Germany. In the course of a speech at Bristol, he announced the intention of the Government to "demand the whole cost of the War from Germany." He stressed the fact that by the jurisprudence of any civilised country, the loser pays.

"It is not a question of vengeance," he added, "it is a question of justice." Pledging himself to exact the last penny out of Germany, up to the limit of her capacity, he proceeded:

"With regard to the Kaiser, there is absolutely no doubt that he has committed a crime against national right. There is absolutely no doubt that he ought to be held responsible for it. As far as the European Allies are concerned, and I hope that America will take the same view, there is no doubt at all as to the demand which will be put forward on the part of the European Allies to make the Kaiser and his accomplices responsible for this terrible crime."

Notwithstanding the general expectation that Lloyd George's appeal to the country in such circumstances could not possibly fail in its purpose of ensuring for his Ministry a largely increased measure of Parliamentary support, no stone was left unturned by the Government Whips to make victory doubly sure. To that end accordingly Lloyd George readily associated himself with Bonar Law in using a jointly-signed letter of commendation to every one of the Parliamentary candidates who were pledged to support the Government. This "Coupon," as the letter was derisively stigmatised by the Opposition, became the distinctive badge of the Georgian candidates. The result of the Election exceeded, in the tremendous sweep of its triumph, the most confident of anticipations. For the 602 seats in Great Britain, no less than 478 Coalition candidates were returned. And the magnitude of the triumph was by no means confined to its numerical proportions for every one

of the Liberal ex-Cabinet Ministers, who had refused to bow the knee in allegiance to Lloyd George's leadership, had suffered defeat. Even Mr. Asquith lost his seat in the fray after an unbroken tenure of more than thirty years. Never in the long record of the British Parliament had any leader secured so phenomenal a personal triumph as that which had fallen to Lloyd George. When the next Parliament assembled, the benches were crowded with his supporters to the point of congestion, while the places of the most trenchant of his critics were conspicuously vacant. But with all its fragrance, the rose, as he was quick to discern, was not without its thorn. Elected as the majority of his supporters had been, amid the clamour of the populace for "hanging the Kaiser" and "for making Germany pay to the very last farthing," Lloyd George required not to be told that they owed their triumph at the polls to popular expectations which had been inflated beyond the possibility of realisation.

A period of two months had elapsed, after the signing of the Armistice, before the Allied statesmen assembled in Paris for the far harder task of drafting the terms of the Treaty of Peace. However, on the eighteenth of January (1919) the Conference was duly and formally constituted. The date was chosen in an obvious attestation of its historic significance, for it marked the anniversary of that fateful day in the year 1871 when, in a spectacular setting of Teutonic triumph, the birth of the German Empire was proclaimed on French soil—in the neighbouring district of Versailles. And thus it came about that,

after a lapse of forty years, the earlier verdict of Mars was being openly reversed and the mortifying memories of an act of the grossest arrogance were being dramatically annulled.

The accredited representatives of the Allied peoples, who thus foregathered in Paris, numbered seventy, and conspicuous among them were some of the leading statesmen of the world. Assembling, as they were, on the conclusion of a Great War, which had involved the fate of Europe, the occasion inevitably revived the memory of the historic Congress which met at Vienna, after the defeat of Napoleon, for the like purpose of settling terms of peace. It was, however, a contrast, rather than a comparison, that the occasion provided; for, while the Vienna Congress was composed of sovereigns and of statesmen, who combined a highly trained skill in the art and technique of diplomacy with an intimate knowledge of every one of the countries involved in their deliberations, the Allied representatives who met at Paris could lay claim to no such outstanding advantages. Absorbed as they had been in the domestic affairs of their own respective countries, with never a care for what lay beyond the rim of their horizon, they were untutored even in the geography of Europe, with the result that the names of places, which immediately challenged their attention, had previously represented for them nothing more than just dots on the map. Indeed so defective was their knowledge even of European geography that some of them confused Silesia with Cilicia. One of them asked that Dalmatia should be pointed out to him

on the map and the connection between it and Fiume should be explained to him; while another of them was heard to enquire what place was it that Rumania was so eager to obtain—meaning Transylvania.

This astonishing ignorance on the part of the leading representatives was subsequently emphasised, with an engaging frankness, by Lloyd George, in the course of a speech which he made in the House of Commons, when he candidly confessed that prior to the assembling of the Conference he did not know that there was such a place as Teschen. "Yet," he added with a significance which was self-evident, "Teschen had very nearly produced an angry conflict between two Allied States."

"If you are drawn into the War," declared Lloyd George to Walter Page on one of the many occasions on which they discussed the prospect of American intervention, "I shall be glad for many reasons, but especially because your Government will then participate in the Peace Conference. I especially desire this," he added, "because of your President's cool and patient and humane counsel which will be wholesome for us all." When he expressed such a desire, it never occurred to him that President Wilson would be prepared to come in person to the Peace Conference and take a part in its exacting discussions. Great therefore was his surprise when he learnt of the President's intention. It was no secret that "the European Prime Ministers were disturbed at the idea of the head of a State, a personage of sovereign seals, sitting with them nominally on equal terms, but with an inalienable superiority of status."

What they really feared in him even more than his panoply of an unchallenged authority, as the supreme head of the mightiest country in the world, was his unrestrained idealism. As was truly said, they looked upon him "as remote from European problems: his principles were couched in vague terms which might be interpreted so as to provide for neither stability nor justice." Hence their natural anxiety lest the secret treaties which they had drawn up among themselves, before the entrance of the United States into the struggle, "should be scrapped at the behest of a distant idealist."[1]

Their apprehensiveness was aggravated still further by the reports which reached them of the President's "autocratic temper," of his "implacable stubbornness" and of his "unyielding insistence on having his own way," and their anxiety was only allayed by Colonel House's assurance that the President was affable in his personal relations and really easy to get on with. With his final decision to attend the Peace Conference, in spite of the expressed hopes of the European Premiers that he would not and of the warnings of his own colleagues that he would thereby be abdicating his supreme and commanding position for that of an advocate, engaged in personal altercation with other advocates around a council table, President Wilson "assumed" that he would be "selected to preside," and it needed House's characteristic tact to break the news to him that, as the Peace Conference would be meeting on French soil, the French Premier would, by established usage, be made its presiding officer.

[1]The Intimate Papers of Colonel House."

"The morrow of the victory," declared Mazzini, "has more perils than its eve." The Conference had not been sitting many days before Lloyd George had cause to recall the observation with a poignant sense of its tragic force. Faced by a common peril, the Allies had been welded together in the bonds of common interests, but with the disappearance of the menace, the sense of unity had perceptibly diminished and marked divergences of policy had become manifest. Each of the represented nations had a claim to make—a demand to press. As one of the ablest of the Press representatives in Paris so justly observed,[1] "Everyone who was anyone wanted something different. France wanted Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar Valley and the left bank of the Rhine, and Syria and part of the Cameroons; Great Britain wanted Mesopotamia and German East Africa and South West Africa and some Pacific Islands and possibly Palestine. Italy wanted the Trentino and Trieste and the Tyrol and Dalmatia and Fiume and parts of Albania and a foothold at Adelia; Japan wanted Shantung and some North Pacific Islands; Greece wanted extensions in Epirus and Macedonia and the return of the Dodecanese and considerable holdings around Smyrna; Belgium wanted parts of German East Africa and various concessions at the expense of Holland; Poland wanted independence; so did Czecho-Slovakia and Jugo-Slavia and the border states of Russia, while Rumania wanted Transylvania and Bessarabia."

[1]Mr. H. Wilson Harris, in "The Peace in the Making."

MR. LLOYD GEORGE SIGNING THE PEACE TREATY

Distracted by such divergences and baffled by their intricacies, it was not surprising that the Conference found itself, at the outset, sorely hampered in the fulfilment of its prescribed task. Its difficulties were further aggravated by its manifest and immovable polarisations. At the one end was President Wilson, with his sublime project of "a community of Power," implemented in the organised co-operation of all the world's nations in a common passion for a world-peace; while at the other end was the French Premier Clemenceau, with his avowed reliance on a new orientation of the old system of "the balance of power"— operating in the alliance of the victorious nations in a world-wide rule.

Thus, from its outset, the Paris Conference became, in the words of the American Secretary of State, "a conflict between the ideal and the material, between the theoretical and the practical, between principle and expediency."

Between these clearly defined poles, Lloyd George may be said to have oscillated. As a practical politician, his instinctive eagerness to secure tangible advantages from a conflict, which had proved so costly to his own country, inclined him to the one; while the cherished traditions in which he had long been nurtured, with their insistent inculcations of the paramount need of peace and good-will among the nations, perceptibly swayed him in the direction of the other. Naturally, as the chief plenipotentiary of Britain, his chief concern was to ensure the primary interests of his own country, but, as he openly confessed, whenever British interests were not in danger,

he was only too glad to find himself at one with President Wilson. But amid the fluctuations of his moods or attitude, he never suffered himself to forget that the main purpose of the Conference should be to secure such a just re-adjustment of the transferred territories as would effectively obviate every element of friction which would be capable of a recurrence of strife at some future time.

It was for that reason that early in the course of the Conference he strongly opposed the proposal for the annexation by Poland of the city of Dantzig, notwithstanding the fact that a commission of experts, which included a very distinguished official of the British Foreign Office, had unanimously reported in favour of a new frontier line, that would have involved the inclusion of nearly two million Germans within the new Polish state. While he readily recognised that considerations of sheer necessity made it imperative that Poland should have a port, as an outlet to the sea, he emphasised the extreme danger of incorporating, within Polish territory, a large alien population which had been wrenched against their will from their own father-land. It was the force of that conviction that led him to insist that the Report of the Commission should be referred back for further consideration. And though the Commission, on re-consideration, adhered to its previous decision, Lloyd George persisted in his opposition, even in face of the clamour which the French Press was vigorously raising against him. However, he ultimately succeeded in his protest, with the result that a new frontier was drawn, the Dantzig

was considerably narrowed, and the German population, which was made subject to Polish rule, was very substantially reduced in bulk.

Immediately after its formal constitution, the Conference, in the manifest need of expeditiousness in the pursuit of its stupendous task, reduced itself to ten principal members—the American President with the Premiers and Foreign Ministers of the five Great Powers—who became known as "the Big Ten," while the representatives of the smaller States were relegated to the various Commissions which were set up for the purpose of supplying "the Big Ten" with full and authenticated information on the various matters that came under their attention. Moreover, steps had to be taken for coping with the grim economic pressure which was being felt in every part of Europe. Practical relief had to be provided in the way of food and finance, and the supply of raw materials for the necessary sustenance of industry in the various countries. As a result, the days lengthened into weeks and still there was no sign that the Conference was yet ready to turn its attention to its primary task in the formulation of the terms of peace for the beaten foe.

XXIX

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS— THE "BIG FOUR"

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TOWARDS the end of the month of February, President Wilson found himself constrained to return home, and in face of the high expectations which had been kindled in his own country by his crusade for a World Peace, he was naturally anxious to take back with him some of "the grapes of Eschol," invisible token of the reality of the Promised Land, which he had so glowingly envisaged before the eyes of his countrymen. For that reason he insisted on the preparation of a draft copy of that Covenant of the League of Nations which, in response to this insistence, the Council of Ten had already agreed should figure in the fore-front of the formulated Treaty of Peace, as the main bulwark in the maintenance of its security. In the words of Mr. Lansing, the American Secretary of State, who had an intimate knowledge of President Wilson's cherished purpose, "The Covenant was to be the *Maxima Charta* of mankind, securing to the nations their rights and liberties, and uniting them for the preservation of universal peace."

Despite Clemenceau's unconcealed scorn for the President's project of a millenium by the talisman of a written covenant, he dare not, in the circumstances,

offer any opposition to its elaboration in draft form; while even Lloyd George, who was known to question the relevancy of a covenant in a treaty with a nation which was denied admission in the League which the Covenant adumbrated, felt constrained, in view of the indebtedness of the Allies to the American people, to agree to President Wilson's demand rather than risk his displeasure. Accordingly all the resources of the machinery of the Conference were commandeered for the accomplishment of the required task. The services of jurists and of draughtsmen, reinforced by a battalion of stenographers and of typists, were requisitioned and all were set to work at high pressure. The Hotel de Crillon, which constituted the American headquarters in Paris, became transferred into a hive of feverish industry with the result that the labours of each successive day were extended beyond midnight amid the incessant click of the multitudinous typewriters. Scheme after scheme was drafted, and re-cast again and again before its final form was agreed upon. However, after much travail, in which President Wilson suffered all the misgivings of an anxious *accoucheur*, the scheme finally came to the birth and its appearance gave him ecstatic joy on the ground that "something had been born alive." It is true that Clemenceau's scepticism remained unaffected and Lloyd George's doubts unrelieved, but in the eyes of President Wilson this formal adoption of "the Covenant of the League of Nations" as the basis of the Peace Treaty represented an event of unique historic importance. Proud of his

offspring, he triumphantly carried away its portrait across the Atlantic in order that his own countrymen might be enabled to admire its features and to share in its progenitor's pride.

Indeed no small part of the President's unconcealed gratification lay in the fact that he was absolutely sure that he had succeeded in putting his cherished parchment beyond the range of destructive criticism, for, as he proudly informed a mass meeting of his countrymen in New York shortly after his arrival, so many threads of the Treaty had been tied to the Covenant, that the one could not be dissected from the other "without destroying the whole vital structure." However, to his keen disappointment he discovered that, so far from evoking the enthusiastic approval of his countrymen, the Covenant served only to elicit their criticisms. The majority of the members of the Senate showed themselves distinctly hostile to its adoption as an integral part of the Treaty on the ground that it involved a violation of the long-cherished Monroe Doctrine, which specifically prescribed non-intervention in European affairs; and it became very evident that its reception would be anything but cordial among the members of the Republican Party.

It must be said that for so unpropitious a prospect, the President was himself mainly responsible, for, as Mr. Churchill has so shrewdly observed, "peace and good-will among all nations abroad, but no truck with the Republican Party at home: that was President Wilson's ticket and that was his ruin, and the ruin of much else as well."

Unquestionably, it was the deliberate aloofness of the President from his political opponents in his own land that provided the generating cause of the studied detachment of the Republican Party from the Covenant at the moment when popular support of the project was of the highest importance. The news of its chilly reception was flashed across to Paris with the result that those who had hitherto been too timorous to object to the inclusion of the Covenant in the texture of the Peace Treaty became emboldened to give articulate utterance to their objections. In this change in the atmosphere of Paris, President Wilson's halo as the acclaimed Messiah of Europe perceptibly wilted. Hero-worship degenerated into bitter criticism, and the fervour of former days evaporated. On his return to France, President Wilson was manifestly ruffled in spirit. Angered by the demand of his opponents for amendments to the Covenant on lines consonant with the basic precepts of the Monroe Doctrine, he was determined to secure the embodiment of his project for the creation of the League of Nations as an integral part of the Peace Treaty rather than have them separated as demanded by the American Senate.

During Wilson's absence, Lloyd George had grown extremely anxious over the tardy manner in which the Peace Conference had been pursuing what should have been its main purpose. Cogitating over the causes of so unjustifiable a delay, he had come to the conclusion that, small though it was, the Council of Ten had really proved too large a body for an effective discharge of its allotted task. It had pro-

vided too great a scope for discussion and, consequently unnecessary delay had been engendered in the process of arriving at definite decisions. In face of the seriousness of the situation, he felt that some drastic change in procedure had become absolutely imperative. To that end he devised a fresh scheme whereby the Council of Ten should be reduced to one of Four, to consist of President Wilson together with the British, French and Italian Premiers. When the scheme was submitted to President Wilson, on his return, he readily and even heartily endorsed its adoption on the ground that it would ensure both rapidity and effectiveness in the determination of critical issues as they arose. And so it came about that "four men in a Library, not ten in a Foreign Office salon, were to re-shape the world."

So informal were the deliberations of the "Four" as they assembled day after day—sometimes in President Wilson's library, sometimes in Lloyd George's drawing-room—that no official record of their proceedings at the outset was kept. The "Four" were content to discuss, in the most disingenuous fashion, the stupendous issues on the outcome of which the destiny of the whole world so manifestly hinged. Happily, Mr. Robert Lansing, who, in virtue of his official position as President Wilson's leading colleague in the American delegation, had the advantage of close and constant contact with each of the "Big Four"—as they came to be popularly designated—has etched, with a masterly hand, their respective traits and their distinctive characteristics. M. Clemenceau's personal appearance, according to so au-

thoritative an eye-witness, was suggestive, in face and figure, of a Chinese mandarin of the old empire—with the sallow complexion, the prominent cheek-bones, the massive forehead with protuberant brows, the slant of the dark eyes, the long, down-curving grey moustache, the short neck, the broad rounded shoulders and the bulky body. "As he sat in the council chamber with his clenched gloved hands resting on the arms of his chair, his eyes with their raised brows and heavy drooping lids, and his features immobile and expressionless, he might," Mr. Lansing has observed, "have been the model for a Chinese statue of Buddha. He was a striking type, indicative of intellectual force, of self-mastery, and of cold merciless will power. Massive, Mongolian and impassive, he watched the course of events with Oriental stoicism and calculated with the unerring instinct of the Western mind where lay the interests of France, to which his thought and energies were consecrated."

According to Mr. Lansing, Clemenceau's fixity of purpose, his practicability, his tolerance of harmless altruism, his mental vitality and keenness of perception made him the most influential personality in the Conference. "He succeeded in nearly everything that he undertook. When it made no difference to France or to French interests, he might argue and debate and finally give up the point; but if the real interests of France, as he saw them, were in the slightest degree affected, he never surrendered."

Of President Wilson, Mr. Lansing has testified that his influence had much to do with preserving

peace in the Council of Four. "Placid and dignified in manner, he impressed upon others a disposition to be calm in expression and to avoid giving way to emotional impulses. In this particular his influence was undoubtedly superior to that of any other man in the Councils or the Conference, and contributed greatly to the amicable settlements of many vexatious disputes which caused personal irritation and which but for his considerate and temperate attitude might have ripened into personal quarrels."

Signor Orlando has been described as possessing "certain qualities of mind which were of an exceptional order and which marked him as a statesman rather than a politician. In fact, his political instinct seemed to be deficient, and events proved him by no means skilful as a political leader." Still, notwithstanding his failure as an opportunist, Mr. Lansing does not hesitate to add that "no member of the Council of Four was his superior in presenting a clear, concise and comprehensive argument during the course of an extemporaneous debate."

But it was Lloyd George, with his subtle methods and still more subtle complexes, that baffled Mr. Lansing, in the pursuit of his task of acquiring a clear and an accurate insight into the mentality of each of the "Big Four." While he marked his superb skill in manœuvring, he marvelled at the rapidity of his evolutions. "In the conferences of the Council, Mr. Lloyd George," according to Mr. Lansing, "disclosed that his training was that of a Par-

liamentarian rather than that of a diplomat. He did not speak in the calm, deliberate and precise manner in which President Wilson spoke, nor in the analytical and closely reasoned style of Signor Orlando when arguing a point. The British statesman was very much of a rough and tumble debater, quick to seize upon the weak points of an opponent and to attack them vigorously, sometimes with sarcasm and ridicule, and often with flat denials of fact. He was better in attack than in defence, as the latter required detailed knowledge of every phase of the question, while in attacking he could choose his own ground. Yet nobody," as Mr. Lansing felt constrained to confess, "could come into intimate association with Lloyd George without falling under the spell of his personal charm. One might dislike his methods as those of a politician; one might even feel a measure of contemptuous surprise that he dared to discuss a question of territory without knowing exactly where the territory was; and there might be a feeling of irritation that he changed his mind whenever it seemed to be expedient; but, with it all, one liked the man: it was simply impossible not to like him. His cheeriness, his vivacity, his never-failing good nature and his delightful humour were assets which counted greatly in his favour."

Although the "Big Four" embarked upon their stupendous task by masking their deliberations with a secrecy even more inscrutable than that which had screened the efforts of the "Ten," their fundamental differences in temperament and in outlook speedily disclosed themselves in a serious cleavage

in policy. The occasion, which provided the crisis, occurred shortly after President Wilson's return to Paris and was engendered by what was known as the "Fiume Affair."

Its roots ran back to the Pact of London which had been negotiated four years earlier when, in their eager anxiety to secure the active intervention of Italy, as an ally in the field, the British and French Governments had agreed, as the stipulated condition of her adhesion, to recognise her right to the possession of certain important islands and ports on the Dalmatian coast, in order to ensure her naval control of the Adriatic Sea and thus to protect by strategic advantages, the harbourless coast of the Italian peninsula against any future aggression on the part of the Austrian Empire. At the close of the War, the long-established regime of the Hapsburg had become shattered beyond all hope of restoration; the Empire had become dissolved into a number of small independent States and as a result the menace of Austrian aggression, which had inspired the Pact of London, had manifestly passed away. With the removal of the menace, the Italians became apprehensive lest they might be required by the representatives of the United States, who were in no way bound by the provisions of the Pact of London, to abandon their former demands. For that reason they resolved to make sure of that which had already been promised by putting forward a demand for still more. This they proceeded to do by urging their claims to the cession of Trieste and Fiume, the two principal ports on the Dalmatian coast, each of

which had hitherto been within the sovereignty of the Austrian Empire. Obviously the possession of these main outlets for trade to the territories lying north and east of the Adriatic Sea would ensure for Italy not only an invulnerable defence against attack, but a very substantial monopoly of the maritime commerce of the Dalmatian coast. In the circumstances it was not surprising that the prospect of such material advantages should serve to fan the flame of patriotic feeling, with the result that the acquisition of Fiume, as well as that of Trieste, became envisaged in the eyes of the Italian people as a matter that involved the honour, no less than the prosperity, of their country, notwithstanding the fact that the population of the port contained a far larger proportion of Jugo-Slavs than Italians. Consequently the Italian delegates in Paris found themselves constrained to dance to the pipings of the Italian populace by pressing the extravagant demand to the possession of Fiume. From the outset President Wilson resisted the Italian claim as unjust, and when he found that Signor Orlando refused to abandon the demand, he issued an appeal to the Italian people to repudiate their own Government's action in putting forward so unjustifiable a claim. In his chagrin over President Wilson's drastic action, the Italian Premier instantly left the conference and returned to Rome. Aided by Lloyd George, President Wilson succeeded in his insistence that Fiume should be ceded to the Jugo-Slavs in recognition of their elemental right to possess a port which should be sufficient for their needs.

Still, it is an ill wind that blows no good, for the failure of the Italian delegates in their clash with the American President subsequently re-acted to the immense advantage of Japan in her conflict with China over the reversion of German rights in Chinese territory. As far back as the year 1898, the German Government had taken advantage of the murder of some German missionaries in the Chinese Province of Shantung by compelling the Chinese Government, under cover of signed treaties, to cede to Germany, for a period of ninety-nine years, full possession of the Province. In the exercise of its acquired right of possession, the German Government had fortified the leased territory, and exploited its advantages by means of railway and harbour construction. With the outbreak of the War in the year 1914, the Japanese Government had demanded from Germany the return of the leased territory, without condition or compensation, with a view to its eventual restoration to China; and, on the refusal of the German Government to comply with this demand, Japanese troops proceeded to take possession of the leased port of Kiro-chan and to occupy the German territory.

Early in the year 1917 China had, after the example of the United States declared war on Germany and had at the same time announced that all treaties between her and Germany had by reason of such declaration become abrogated. However, shortly before China's severance of diplomatic relationship with Germany, the Japanese Government had received a secret assurance from the Allied Powers

that they would support at the Peace Conference, Japan's claims to the reversion of Germany's possessions in China. The representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy at the Peace Conference, were thus restricted, as Mr. Lansing has rightly pointed out,[1] by the promises which their respective Governments had made at a time when they were not in a position to refuse Japan's request. But President Wilson and his American colleagues were unhampered by any such previous commitment and they made no secret of their contention that, in view of the fact that the Treaty of 1898 had been abrogated by China's declaration of war on Germany, all German rights in Shantung had thereby ceased and that consequently their reversion had ceased to be negotiable. For that reason President Wilson was as prepared to resist the Japanese claims to Chinese territory as resolutely as he had resisted the Italian demand to the possession of Fiume. When, however, he learnt that the Japanese delegates were implacable in their determination to remain outside the League of Nations and even to decline to sign the Treaty of Peace unless their claims were first conceded, he came to the conclusion that, without Japan's adherence to the Covenant, the materialisation of his deeply-cherished project would be seriously jeopardised, if not indeed wrecked, more especially as the Italian delegates had already left Paris. As he was resolutely bent upon carrying through his scheme to a triumphant issue, whatever the cost, he found himself constrained, on the ground that

[1] In "The Peace Negotiations."

so worthy an end justified the means in its attainment, to agree to Japan's demand, notwithstanding the fact that it perceptibly violated the principle of self-determination, which he had incorporated as an integral part of his formulated Points. As the chief of his American colleagues at the Peace Conference expressed it, with an undisguised sadness, "the President fully believed that the League of Nations was in jeopardy and that to save it he was compelled to subordinate every other consideration."

With their attention thus distracted by the exasperating problems of Fiume and of Shantung, the quartette of the World's arbiters struggled hard to pursue the uneven tenor of their way to their main objective. But at every turn they continued to find themselves harassed by fresh complications and challenged by unexpected perils, for no sooner was one crisis surmounted than another immediately projected itself athwart their path with grim stubbornness. Russia was perceptibly sinking into a desperate state of famine and starvation, with the result that the "Big Four" found themselves driven to the stern necessity of taking immediate steps to relieve her plight. Then Rumania made war afresh on Hungary; and, with the sound of battle, the traditional restiveness of the Czechs and the Serbs began to re-assert itself with the result that indications were not wanting that the countries were in serious danger of becoming ablaze afresh.

The crucial task of the Conference, however, pivoted on its attitude to Germany. With the defeat of their traditional foe, the French people

were resolved upon making their future security doubly sure by tearing from Germany the province to the left bank of the Rhine and grafting it into France. Their demand was both espoused and articulated by Marshal Foch in a Memorandum which he submitted to Clemenceau. "To stop the enterprises towards the west of the German nation, everlastingly warlike and covetous of the good things belonging to other people, only recently formed and pushed on to conquest by force, regardless of all rights and by ways the most contrary to all law, seeking always the mastery of the world, Nature has only made one barrier—the Rhine."

Foch's scheme openly stipulated for the recognition of the Rhine as France's "natural frontier" on her eastern side, with the consequent creation of autonomous states which, though composed of German populations, were to be wholly independent of German rule.

To that demand President Wilson instantly offered the most strenuous opposition on the ground that it violated that principle of "the consent of the governed" which he had made a cardinal principle in his Fourteen Points. In his opposition he had the vigorous support of Lloyd George who fully shared the President's feeling that anything of the nature of a vindictive peace should be avoided at all costs. As a matter of fact, he had in the early course of the Conference caught the glow of President Wilson's lofty purpose, with the result that he had issued a Memorandum with the unconcealed object of allaying in all the Allied countries all desire for revenge and of creating an atmosphere which should

be conducive to a strictly just settlement. "When nations," declared the Memorandum, "are exhausted by wars in which they have put forth all their strength and which leave them tired, bleeding and broken, it is not difficult to patch up a peace that may last until the generation, which experienced the horrors of war, has passed away. What is difficult, however, is to patch up a peace which will not provoke a fresh struggle when those, who have had practical experience of what war means, have passed away.

"You may strip Germany of her colonies," continued the Memorandum, "reduce her armaments to a mere police force, and her navy to that of a fifth-rate Power; it will be all the same in the end. If she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the peace of 1919, she will find means of exacting retribution from her conquerors. Our terms may be severe. They may be stern and ruthless, but at the same time they can be so just that the country on which they are imposed will feel in its heart that it has no right to complain. But injustice, arrogance, displayed in the hour of triumph will never be forgotten nor forgiven."

He had followed up the publication of this Memorandum with an unwearying persistency in Paris for the triumph of its sentiments, with the result that disquieting messages had been transmitted from Paris to the British press, intimating that the British Premier was perceptibly weakening in his electioneering promises to make Germany pay for all the havoc she had wrought.

And so it came about that a telegraphic message, signed by 370 Members of Parliament, was despatched to Lloyd George in declaration of their expectation that "the first action of the Peace Conference would be, as you yourself repeatedly stated in your Election speeches, to present the Bill in full and make Germany acknowledge the debt." On receipt of so minatory a message, he decided forthwith to nip in the bud the distrust of so large a body of his Parliamentary supporters. This he subsequently did in a speech in the House of Commons which was so cogent is its argument and so forcible in its appeal that it secured for him, by an overwhelming majority, a vote of confidence. Encouraged by so striking a triumph he journeyed back to Paris in quickened determination to resist any attempt on the part of France to wrest from Germany her Rhine territories.

In his rôle as the chief custodian of French interests, Clemenceau readily associated himself with the popular demand for the alignment of the Rhine as "the strategic frontier," with the result that the temperamental differences, which had from the outset of the Conference separated the American President from the French Premier, became visibly aggravated in a clash of policies. "There are two systems in opposition," observed a leading French journalist in the survey of the situation. "One believes that it is necessary to seek in annexations, in buffer-states, in strategic frontiers, all the guarantees of peace. The other is the principle of justice, of moderation, of collaboration."

So perilous did the situation become and so hopeless the outlook, that President Wilson became

utterly disheartened. He began to realise that the mighty task which he had assigned himself of bringing the healing leaves of the New World to stanch the gaping wounds of the Old, was beyond the power of accomplishment, and in the bitterness of his chagrin he gave orders that his ship, *George Washington*, which lay at Brest, should be forthwith prepared to take him back home. Manifestly, with his departure, all hope of the Peace, for which the whole world was so perceptibly pining, would have gone, too, and Europe would forthwith be reduced to a more forlorn state than ever.

Happily, at so critical a juncture, President Wilson found in Lloyd George a loyal and steadfast ally in his resolute opposition to all that savoured of aggression, with the result that he decided to cancel his earlier order and to remain in Paris for the accomplishment of his ardently cherished mission.

In their eagerness to deflect France from the pursuit of a purpose which would inevitably result in perpetuating the cause of strife in Western Europe and thus generate afresh the conditions that make for war, the American President and the British Premier induced the French Premier to abandon the demand for the Rhine frontier in exchange for a pact by the terms of which both the United States and Great Britain formally agreed to come to the aid of France in the event of any unprovoked attack upon her territory by Germany. With characteristic shrewdness Clemenceau was quick to see that such an undertaking was much more formidable in its significance and much more effective in its opera-

tion, in the event of another war with Germany, than the strategic advantages of the Rhine frontier could possibly be and consequently he readily closed with the offer. And thus it came about that at long last—after a delay that had been protracted over a period of five months—the terms of the Peace Treaty were finally drafted and agreed upon.

Exclusively the work of three men—the American President, the British and the French Premiers—the Treaty was subsequently presented, amid a scene which was fraught with historic significance, in the famous Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, on the twenty-eighth of June (1919) where it was duly signed by sixty-eight representatives of the Allied Governments and by two envoys of the German Government.

After five months' sore travail, which had been attended by divers and serious menaces, the Treaty, for which the whole world had been so patiently waiting, had at last come to the birth. Hopes, that had long been deferred, had culminated in the joy of attainment.

XXX

THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

CHAPTER XXX

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FLUSHED with the triumph of so historic an achievement, President Wilson re-crossed the Atlantic and Lloyd George returned to London to be received, on his arrival, by the King in person—an unprecedented mark of Royal favour in the annals of British statesmen—and to be acclaimed by the vast crowds that thronged the route of his triumphal progress to the King's Palace.

In the eyes of President Wilson, the outstanding value of the Treaty lay in its incorporation of his cherished Covenant of the League of Nations as an integral part of the document—so integral, indeed, that it could not be wrenched out of its setting without doing violence to its texture. He was thus able to claim that he had succeeded in his mission and that his journey to Paris had been fully justified in its results. His triumph, however, had been bought at a great price, for to the settlement there had been appended two treaties, one guaranteeing the armed intervention of Britain and the other that of the United States in defence of France against any unprovoked attack upon her territory by Germany. This double guarantee was the cornerstone of the whole settlement from the point of view of both France

and Great Britain. It was the condition on which Clemenceau had felt justified in resisting the clamorous demands of the French militarists for an indefinite occupation of the Rhennish provinces as an effective safeguard against the recurring peril of German aggression; while for Britain the stipulated guarantee carried with it an obvious advantage inasmuch as it ensured the effective co-operation of the United States in the task of exercising a powerful restraint upon the unconcealed eagerness of the French people to reduce Germany to a state of irrecoverable weakness.

Alas! The pæons which had hailed the triumph of Versailles, and sent their thrilling reverberations through the world, proved to be of short duration, for scarcely had President Wilson reached his native shores than it became evident that the exultant hopes, which had blossomed around the Treaty, had already become smitten by a deadly blight and that its chief signatories were doomed to bitter disappointments. Notwithstanding President Wilson's fervid pleas and entreaties, the American Senate, on the ground that the treaty of guarantee was a violation of America's traditional policy of aloofness from all European alliances, resolutely refused to ratify the Treaty, and consequently the British treaty became null and void. For France, however, the situation became grim with peril, for she was left without promise of security against an unscrupulous neighbour that had twice ravaged her territory, in the most ruthless fashion, in the course of half a century.

In the circumstances it was not surprising that, in the eyes of the French people, the rejection of

the guarantee securities assumed the sinister form of a base betrayal, and that they should consequently feel that "what had been won by the victory had been lost by the Peace Treaty, and what had been saved at the Marne and at Verdun had been sacrificed at Versailles."[1]

In her exasperation over the miscarriage of her confident anticipations of a permanent and effective security against German aggression, France felt that no course lay open to her but to fall back upon her own resources in sullen resolve to ensure the necessary security. Her troops were already on the Rhine and under the terms of the Treaty they were entitled to occupy the territory until Germany had made the necessary reparations to her. In face of the fact that the American Senate was not prepared to ratify the signed undertaking of its own President and of the consequent reluctance of the British Government to bear the unrelieved strain of the sole responsibility for the desired security, the French statesmen found themselves driven to the decision that France must take the full burden on her own shoulders in an unconcealed belief that "what had been lost in the security treaties might be regained in the reparations clauses."[1] For that reason they readily turned their attention to the cherished project of the French militants for the occupation of the Ruhr Valley, in the form of permanent military garrisons, in cynical heedlessness of the repercussions, both moral and economic, of such action, not only on the interests of Germany but even on the wider interests of Europe as a whole.

[1] Mr. F. H. Simonds.

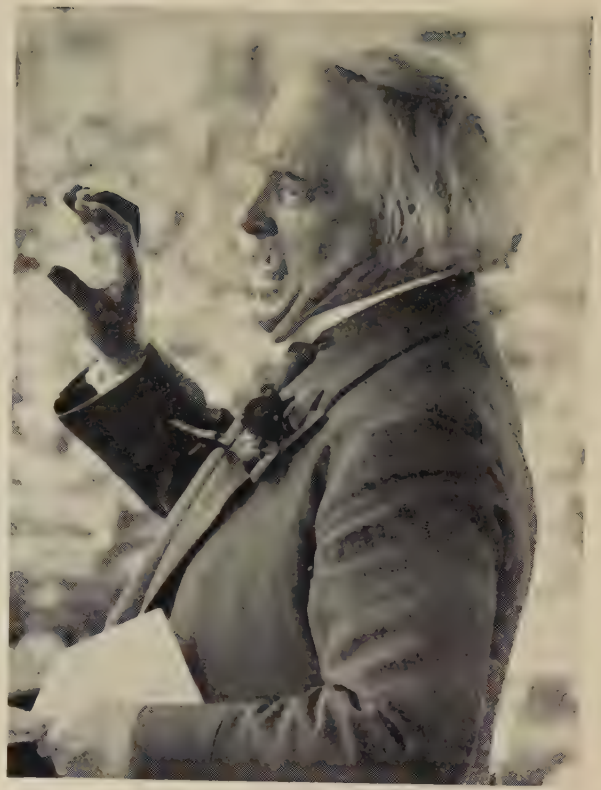
So perilous a development in the situation had the immediate effect of casting upon Lloyd George fresh responsibilities and increased anxieties. He was quick to perceive that such precipitate action on the part of France would inevitably impair the provisions of the Peace Treaty by fomenting afresh the spirit of bitterness between France and Germany and consequently revive the old conditions which had eventuated in a state of war. For that reason he zealously set himself to the task of soothing the ruffled feelings of the French people and of dissuading her statesmen from embarking upon reckless projects. France thus came to occupy as dominating a place in his daily anxieties as Germany had held during the grim days of the War. But the difficulty of his task was perceptibly aggravated by reason of the fundamental difference in the respective attitudes of Britain and France towards Germany. In their unconcealed belief that a revived Germany was essential to Europe's restoration, British statesmen were frankly eager to promote Germany's economic rehabilitation; while the French people, in their natural fear of a revengeful neighbour, made no secret of their anxiety to retard such recovery in every possible way. For that reason, while professing their eagerness to secure material reparations from the foe for the stupendous damage wrought within their boundaries, French statesmen were, in reality, set upon Germany's economic ruin—a ruin which, in face of the fact that, in pre-War days Germany had been one of the most profitable of Britain's customers, would inevitably react to the detriment of British

trade. "There are many devastated areas," Lloyd George ejaculated at an Anglo-French Conference—in retort to the emphatic references which the French spokesmen were making to their devastated areas, in emphasising the dire results which the War had involved for their country—as he reminded them of the gaunt spectres of unemployment and of want that were haunting the industrial districts in his own country, which, prior to the War, had been thriving centres of commercial activity. And the exclamation, as an unbiassed observer[1] of the situation has remarked, was just. "Lens, Rheims and St. Quentin were rising from their ruins to normal activity, but Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, their walls intact, remained as enduring evidences of a destruction quite as complete as that which levelled French cities."

This fundamental divergence between the cherished aims of the French and the British Governments, with its prospect of a rupture of the Anglo-French Alliance, naturally reacted on the mood and temper of the German people. They were quick to perceive in the situation a strategic opportunity for relieving themselves of their exacting obligations to the Allies and they instantly set themselves to snatch it. At the instigation of their leaders a couple of German brigades openly defied the orders for their demobilisation and they instantly followed up their revolt by seizing Berlin and setting up a military government with the result that the President of the Republic found it necessary to flee to Dresden.

[1] Mr. Frank H. Simonds.

The outlook became perilous in the extreme. The spirit of revolution was abroad in the land, and there were sinister signs that, in their eagerness to take advantage of the situation, the German militarists were prepared to precipitate the country into fresh strife in open repudiation of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Happily, the masses, in their clear discernment of the dominating motive of so reckless an outbreak, refused to give it countenance, with the result that the revolters found themselves compelled to abandon their project and to retire from the capital. The President returned and the Republic continued. The incident was not without its moral for Lloyd George. He discerned in it manifest proof that, notwithstanding her dire experiences, Germany was still at heart impenitent, and that, so far from being extinguished, as he had hoped, the fire of resistance was still smouldering beneath the débris. For that reason he became convinced that the position was much too perilous to permit any severance of the alliance between France and Britain, and that, consequently, the stability of Europe could be secured only by the removal of the causes that were so perceptibly engendering a perilous state of friction between the two countries. To that end he devoted his diplomatic skill and his untiring energies in a resolute effort to promote a better understanding and to secure co-operation in both policy and action.



MR. LLOYD GEORGE ADDRESSING AN AUDIENCE—IN A CHARACTERISTIC ATTITUDE

INSTALLED BY THE SIOUX INDIANS AS "BIG CHIEF TWO EAGLES," SIGNIFYING "GREAT IN WAR AND GREAT IN PEACE."

XXXI

LATER CONFERENCES AND CONTROVERSIES

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LATER CONFERENCES AND CONTROVERSIES

OBVIOUSLY, the signing of the Peace Treaty at Versailles represented but a stage in the gigantic task of restoring Europe to an effective peace basis. The Treaty required to be implemented in the fulfilment of its prescribed obligations and in the discharge of its entailed responsibilities. For that reason it became necessary to summon fresh Conferences of the Supreme Council as being the most effective body for undertaking the duties of implementation. The first of these Conferences, which was held at San Remo, was signalised by an undertaking by M. Millerand, who had succeeded Clemenceau in the French Premiership, that evacuation of German territory by French troops should take place as soon as the German Government proceeded to the fulfilment of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. This undertaking was supplemented by a definite pledge that the French Government would not again act alone in occupying German territory. On the strength of that pledge the British Premier promised joint action with the French, should Germany persist in her attitude of a sullen disregard of her obligations under the Treaty.

The San Remo gathering was followed by a Conference at Hythe where Lloyd George urged afresh

the desirability of tempering the terms of the Treaty to the precarious state of the German people. The wisdom of a lenient policy, was, however, shattered at the Conference which was held shortly afterwards at Spa, at which the German Chancellor declared the inability of the German Government to proceed to the stipulated disarmament of its Army. Thereupon an ultimatum was issued to Germany, and French troops were concentrated in readiness to occupy the Ruhr. The threat of force succeeded in its purpose of terrifying the German Government into an undertaking to hasten the required disarmament. But scarcely had this difficulty been overcome than the Allied Governments found themselves confronted by one of still greater magnitude in the form of an invasion of Poland by the Red Armies of Russia, the dire perils of which were self-evident. Both Britain and France agreed that the safety of European civilisation required that the Russian advance should be instantly arrested and that Poland should be saved from the devastation that threatened her. Aided by the Allies and reinforced by French military contingents, the Poles succeeded not only in resisting the attack, but also in driving the Russians into an absolute rout. But the triumph of Poland served only to reveal afresh the deepening fissure in the policies of France and Britain, for while France, in her unconcealed appreciation of the fact that Poland now ranked as one of her natural allies, approved of her action in pressing her victory to the utmost limits, the British Government felt it its duty to protest against its

ruthless seizure of Russian territory as booty. While Poland was thus displaying her prowess in the field, countries like Rumania, Czecho-Slovakia, and Jugo-Slavia, in the quickening anxiousness of the increased territory and prestige which had accrued to them as the result of the War, and at the instigation of a common peril on either German or Russian borders, were coming together in the form of a Little Entente and were looking to France as their natural and powerful protector. Naturally this creation of a new system of alliances on the Continent, with its manifest proof of the expansion of French military power, had its reaction on public sentiment in Britain, for it served to demonstrate that the old evil of military alliances which had led to the outbreak of the War in 1914 was beng revived by France. The two Allied countries that had borne the brunt of the Teutonic forces for four years, were visibly drifting apart—so much so that "by the close of 1920, the Anglo-French Alliance had become of little practical value. It was no more than a nominal tie between two peoples who saw their vital interests as conflicting and felt them fast becoming irreconcilable."[1]

With his intimate knowledge of the situation, Lloyd George fully realised its gravity. Strongly as he disapproved of the obstinacy with which France was pursuing her policy of reducing Germany to a state of permanent impotence, he realised that the dissolution of the Anglo-French Alliance, so far from deterring France in her wayward course, would

[1]Mr. F. H. Simonds.

in fact, serve to free her from the last restraint which had hitherto prevented her from proceeding to realise her unconcealed eagerness to take possession of German territory. But again, while he was devising ways and means for bringing the French statesmen to a more accommodating state of mind, the obtuseness of the German rulers, in their fatuous attempt to exploit, to their advantage, the divergence in policy that divided the French and British Governments, left him no course other than to associate himself with the French policy of coercing the defaulting nation into a state of submission to their obligations. Early in the year 1921, Conferences were held in Paris and in London for the purpose of establishing an agreement among the Allies in regard to the total amount of Reparations which they were entitled to demand from Germany. On the presentation of the agreed claim to the German Government, the German Foreign Minister offered in reply payments which were absurdly inadequate and, even so, such an offer was made contingent upon certain considerations which involved the revision of the Peace Treaty. Again Lloyd George found himself constrained by such Teutonic ineptitude to set aside his plea for moderation of policy and to associate himself with the French resolve to resort to military action for compelling Germany to observe her liabilities. As a result, early in the month of March, Allied troops took possession of the industrial districts of the Ruhr and new customs barriers were set up in the isolation of the Rhineland from the Reich.

However, while Germany was thus in the throes of a fresh convulsion, the situation became seriously aggravated by the crisis which followed in the autumn, over the result of a plebiscite, prescribed by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which had the effect of transferring the Upper Silesian district, with its rich coal seams, from the possession of Germany to that of Poland. In this struggle for so rich a prize, France openly backed Poland, while the British Government, on the ground that the majority of the population was German, supported the claim of Germany to its retention. So acute became the tension between the two countries that M. Briand, the French Premier, and Lloyd George found it necessary to meet in friendly conference in an attempt to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the problems. Notwithstanding the cordiality of their personal relationship, they failed to come to an agreement. In face of the fact that Poland had become an ally of France, the French Premier dare not agree to subordinate her interests to considerations of equity. Consequently the two Premiers agreed to submit the issue to the decision of the League of Nations. When, however, in the month of October, the League awarded to Poland the larger part of the industrial area of Upper Silesia, the gratification of France had its counterpart in the chagrin of Lloyd George and his colleagues.

However, in the autumn of the year 1921, there came a rift in the cloudy firmament which seemed to presage a clearer sky. It came in the decision of the United States Government to convene a conference of the world's naval powers at Washington,

for the purpose of arriving at an agreement as regards their respective adjustments of naval tonnage, and thus abolish that naval rivalry which is not only extremely expensive in its maintenance, but perilous to the peace of the world in its operations.

Although the Washington Conference was thus convened to deal with a matter in which Britain had hitherto displayed an unchallenged supremacy—a supremacy which had placed itself beyond the pale of any argument, Lloyd George readily hailed the overtures with unconcealed gratification, for, as he was quick to discern, it re-established afresh a vitalising contact between the United States and Europe, the galvanic effects of which would be felt in every part of the Old World which was still suffering from the devastating shock of the War. No one had lamented the departure of the United States from the Councils of the Allies so deeply as had he, with his acute consciousness of the consideration that, had only America retained her seat at the Council Board, France could not possibly have become so aggressive in her attitude or so openly chauvinistic in her purposes. For that reason he approved of the projected Conference at Washington with alacrity, and he chose as Britain's representative no other than Mr. Balfour, in a well-grounded confidence that, with a man of his pre-eminence and prestige, British interests would be in safe keeping.

Although the Washington Conference, with its provisions for a mutual reduction of their respective navies by the victors, was acclaimed by Lloyd George as being "in some respects the most remark-

able international Conference ever held," it did not fulfil the ardent hopes with which he had hailed it, for the French representatives, with their sensitiveness to public opinion in their own country, strenuously resisted the proposals for the abolition of submarines, on the ground that France deemed it necessary in the interests of self-defence, seeing that she had not many battle-ships, to rely upon under-sea craft. And thus it came about that the Washington Conference, which had been begotten of a lofty desire to ensure an effective naval limitation in the insurance of a permanent peace, degenerated into a fresh battle-ground of controversy in which French and British interests again came to the clash. With the failure of the Conference to reach its desired end, Lloyd George strongly urged that it be summoned afresh—but on European soil. As he very shrewdly surmised, such a step would have the inestimable advantage of luring America back to the Council Board of the Allies, where, as he confidently anticipated, the full weight of her influence would invariably be cast in favour of the British policy of seeking the economic restoration of Europe rather than that of France for still further punitive measures for the vanquished hope. But skilfully though the net was laid for the re-capture of the American eagle, it was laid in vain; for, mindful of the fate of his predecessor at the White House, President Harding declined the overtures. And so it came about that the representatives of Britain and of France returned home with their differences uncomposed and their divergences of policy still unbridged.

Bitterly disappointed in his cherished hopes of the Washington Conference and seriously alarmed by the action of the French Government in weaving a network of military alliances in perpetuation of the system which had invariably plunged Europe into the horrors of war, Lloyd George embarked upon yet another resolute effort to deflect France from her wayward and perilous course. As he openly confessed, he was anxious to secure her co-operation in a general endeavour to clear up the European situation and "establish a real peace from the Urals to the Atlantic sea-board."

In clear discernment of the dominating fact that French apprehensiveness of the European situation constituted a very serious and even an insuperable barrier in the attainment of the desired settlement and of the further fact that, until such fears were effectively dispelled it would be futile to attempt to persuade the French Government to adopt a more conciliatory attitude, Lloyd George came to the conclusion that it was well worth the required price to attain the desired end. Accordingly when in the month of January, (1922) he set out for Cannes to meet Briand, the French Premier, in conference at the Reparations Commission, he carried with him the formal offer of the British Cabinet of a defensive alliance with France in return for a modification of her attitude towards Germany—an attitude which, as he said, would inevitably keep Europe indefinitely in a state of turmoil. Belated though the offer was, Briand was prepared to accept it on the ground that it fulfilled the main purpose of the

Anglo-American pact of guaranteed support in the event of German aggression, which had become defunct. It gave France that assurance of armed assistance in the time of need, which she regarded as the greatest of her needs. Consequently the Cannes Conference promised to be both the cause and the occasion of a renewed cordiality between the two countries. As Lloyd George afterwards claimed, as he reviewed its memories, never had the Entente shown more promise of hopeful partnership for the peace of the world than was shown at Cannes. But just when its promise seemed to be on the point of materialisation, it was suddenly shattered. And the disaster came, as has been truly observed, "as an immediate consequence of one of the most grotesque episodes in all diplomatic history." In the cordiality of their personal relationship, Lloyd George had taken Briand, on a sunny afternoon, to a game of golf, on one of the Cannes' courses. Instantly the news was telegraphed to Paris and on the morrow the French newspapers displayed pictures in which the British Premier was seen instructing his French colleague in the exercise of the game. In the hectic state of French public opinion at that time, the trivial incident became invested with a most sinister significance. It was regarded as positive proof that Briand had succumbed to the mesmeric wiles of the British Premier, and that therefore French interests were not safe in his keeping. Consequently, he perceptibly lost public favour with the result that, on his return to Paris, he deemed it advisable to tender his resignation. The resignation was forth-

with accepted, and M. Poincaré, who had persistently urged the policy of a rigorous attitude to Germany, succeeded him in the Premiership. The accession of Poincaré to power, with the consequent substitution of an unsympathetic Administration, could not but prove disconcerting to Lloyd George, for, as he was quick to realise, it involved the delay, if not indeed the defeat, of the high hopes with which he had set out to Cannes. However, though the Cannes Conference had thus brought disaster to Briand, it had furnished Lloyd George with one conspicuous triumph in its assent to his suggestion for the convocation of an international conference at Genoa, to which all the Powers of Europe, including even Germany, Russia, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, should be invited to send accredited representatives for the purpose of devising effective means for ensuring the economic reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe, by "the removal of all obstacles in the way of trade, the provision of substantial credits for the weaker countries and the co-operation of all nations in the restoration of normal prosperity."

The ardent expectations which he entertained of the projected gathering were revealed in a speech which he made in London in which he envisaged, with glowing fervour, its anticipated results: "The worker will be able to labour without apprehension, credit will be given and extended; the broken avenues of trade will be repaired, normal life resumed and the world march on to plenty and tranquillity." Alluring as was the vista which he thus unrolled before

Parliament, it evoked no ecstatic emotion, as he soon discovered, on the other side of the English Channel. Acutely conscious of Lloyd George's unrivalled prowess in conferences, in the exercise of which he had conspicuously succeeded in out-witting Clemenceau, out-classing Millerand and mesmerising Briand, Poincaré was resolved to profit by the fate of his predecessors by refusing to go into "the spider's parlour" with its magic casements. In face of the fact that Briand had agreed at Cannes to the Genoa Conference, Poincaré could not veto the project, but he was determined to denude it of its volcanic possibilities, even though he had already resolved to keep aloof from it. He met the British Premier at a preliminary meeting at Boulogne in the month of February, when he forthwith sterilised the Genoa agenda by his stipulations that the question of German reparations should not come under consideration in any form, that the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles should not be challenged and that the consideration of international debts should be excluded from debate. In his eagerness to ensure that the projected gathering of the representatives of the European peoples should be held and in his well-grounded belief, begotten of personal experience, that atmosphere is of far greater importance than agenda, Lloyd George agreed to such exacting stipulations. But, the marked differences between the two men in both temperament and policy, were accentuated still further by their discussion on Britain's offer to France of a Pact of Guarantee of a defence of her frontier in the event of German aggression. As the French Pre-

mier would accept nothing less than a formal military alliance, after the manner of the former alliance with Russia, and as the British Premier could not embark upon an undertaking which would so obviously mark a drastic break with British traditions, the proffered Pact fell through and the two Premiers parted with an unconcealed divergence in both policy and purpose.

However, the Genoa Conference, which was openly regarded as "Lloyd George's last bid for European leadership," duly met in the month of April when no less than thirty-four European countries were officially represented. The uniqueness of the occasion lay not only in the unprecedented magnitude of its representation, but even more in its composition of heterogeneous elements, for the representatives of the victorious and of the vanquished peoples met for the first time since the War on absolute equality. Even the Bolshevik representatives of Soviet Russia, who had been regarded as the pariahs of Europe, were accorded a genuine welcome. "There were nations at that Conference table," as Lloyd George subsequently recalled in reviewing the circumstances of the occasion, "hardly on speaking terms with one another. There had been feuds and misunderstandings between them, prolonged up to the very hour of the Conference. We met," he added, "in perfect calm, in perfect harmony."

All differences in status, prestige or forms of government were synthesised in an all absorbing consciousness of a common purpose which Lloyd George happily described as that of "seeking out the best

methods of restoring the shattered prosperity of Europe so that each may build up in his own land, each in his own way, a better condition of things than the world has yet enjoyed."

Notwithstanding the wide range of its membership, the Conference was not without its manifest disappointment for its chief promoter. America's absence made a conspicuous gap at the table which nothing could fill. "A distinguished citizen of this city," observed Lloyd George, as he recalled that Genoa was the birthplace of Columbus, "once upon a time discovered America, and as Genoa in the past discovered America to Europe, I am hopeful that Genoa once more will render another immortal service to humanity by re-discovering Europe to America."

Notwithstanding the absence of any American representatives and the still more ominous aloofness of the French Premier, the assembled gathering at Genoa embarked upon its main purpose with manifest zest. In the task of dealing with the obstacles, that were so perceptibly retarding the attainment of normal conditions throughout Europe, such as the instability of the exchanges, the customs and trading restrictions, the transport difficulties and the absence of the necessary sense of security against war, four special Commissions were set up. These Commissions pursued their investigations with an exhaustive thoroughness and the results of their painstaking labours were duly embodied in a series of valuable Reports which provided full and authenticated information as regards such complicated mat-

ters as currencies and customs, trade and transport, between the various countries.

Still more valuable, as indicative of the achievements of the Genoa gathering, was the "Pact," made by the assembled representatives whereby they pledged their respective countries to abstain from any act of aggression against their neighbours. When the various representatives assembled at Genoa, Lloyd George justly observed, in emphasising the significance of such an undertaking, that there were few of them who were not oppressed with suspicions that their neighbours were meditating violence against their frontiers. They had come to Genoa anxious for peace but apprehensive of impending war. The Genoa Conference, as he proudly claimed, dispelled all such anxieties.

The credit for so notable an achievement was preeminently his. His was the subtle alchemy that had produced an atmosphere so perceptibly conducive to an instinctive sense of good-will among the various representatives. With consummate skill he had set himself to soothe the susceptibilities of the French, to soften the sullenness of the Germans and even to allay the manifest suspicions of the Russians. Whenever Tchitcherin, the leader of the Bolshevik delegation, sought, with characteristic recklessness, to raise controversial issues which lay outside the prescribed course of the Conference, Lloyd George would instantly supply the soft answer that soothed the savage breast, or he would still the raucous note with just a touch of humour that evoked the merriment of even the Bolsheviks themselves. When, for instance, Tchitcherin ruffled the French repre-

sentatives by his strident demand for "a universal conference," in which the issue of disarmament could be raised, Lloyd George humorously reminded him that there was a vast variety of the most promising material for quarrelling with everybody if he only confined himself to the Genoa agenda. "The Conference," he urged, "has already got as large a cargo as it can carry. Every civilised country marked a load-line on its merchant ships in order to show how heavily they could be laden. M. Tchitcherin must not remove the load-line. If he does, he may sink the ship and perhaps," he added, as he smiled at the Soviet spokesman, "find himself among the drowned."

"Alas! Satan is not done with Europe," was Lloyd George's lamentation when his cherished expectations of the Cannes Conference were utterly shattered by an unexpected ministerial crisis in France, just when the Conference appeared to be on the threshold of fulfilment. But "Satan," as he discovered to his unconcealed vexation, was by no means content with the triumph of his wrecking activities at Cannes. He must needs repeat them in a more daring fashion at Genoa. While the various Commissions, composed of representatives of the various countries, were hard at work in their appointed tasks in unravelling the complications which had destroyed the stability of European currencies and choked up the wells of commercial enterprise, there came, veritably like a bolt from the blue, the startling and sensational report that the German and Russian representatives had met secretly at

Rapallo and drawn up a Treaty whereby Germany formally recognised the Bolshevik Government and Russia agreed to waive all her claims, under the Treaty of Versailles, for reparations from Germany. The new Treaty further stipulated for a reciprocal cancellation of all debts between the two countries. Naturally the news created quite a panic among the other delegates at Genoa, who rightly discerned in the Treaty a distinct violation of the spirit of the Conference, and a challenge to its purpose. The sinister significance of such a Treaty was self-evident, for, as was pointed out by one of the ablest of the correspondents at the Genoa Conference,[1] "its potentialities were incalculable. It threatened to revive the old bi-castral system in Europe, to organise the old Continent once more in two armed camps, to open an infinite prospect of *revanche*, and conflict and even possibly to repeat in no distant future the shambles of 1914-1918." In short, it materialised the menace which Lloyd George had envisaged in his Memorandum to the Peace Conference three years earlier, as "the greatest danger in the situation"—the danger that Germany might throw in her lot with Bolshevism and place her resources, her brains, her vast organising power, at the disposal of the revolutionary fanatics, who dreamt of conquering the world for Bolshevism by force of arms. And it was just that sinister combination of Russia, with its vast wealth of natural resource, and of Germany with its unsurpassable achievements in technical skill, which he had dreaded as the most for-

[1] Mr. Saxon Mills, in "The Genoa Conference."

midable menace to European peace, that had thus taken place under cover of the Treaty of Rapallo. With a just discernment of the grim significance of such a Treaty, the representatives of the leading Powers at Genoa forthwith despatched a strongly-worded formal protest to the President of the German delegation in which they stigmatised the conclusion of such an agreement, while the Conference was in session, as "a violation of the conditions to which Germany pledged herself in entering the Conference," and even "a violation of some of the principles on which the Conference was based." For that reason Germany was henceforth debarred from entering into the discussion of the conditions of an arrangement between Russia and the other European countries represented at the Genoa Conference.

The significance of the Russia-Germany Treaty was self-evident. Though not laden above its load-line, the Genoa Conference had been torpedoed on its outward voyage. But its intrepid skipper stubbornly refused to abandon the ship or to be daunted by his difficulties. On the contrary, he met disappointment with renewed determination, and even disaster with a stubbornness of purpose that refused to be deflected from its course. Never was his resource shown to greater advantage. In spite of the deadly blow which the Russians and the Germans had dealt the Conference, he perceptibly retrieved its prestige and invested it afresh with dynamic force. He minimised threatening difficulties with a gaiety of spirit which pervaded the whole atmosphere with the result that his confidence became contagious. They who at the out-

set had been prepared to doubt the usefulness of the Conference, became convinced of its need. He dominated the counsels of the assembled representatives with such ease and directed their deliberations in so masterly a fashion that he was fervidly acclaimed by the Italian Press as "the Prime Minister of Europe," while an American journalist, as he marked his pre-eminent place in the council of the nations, frankly confessed that New England envied Old England in her possession of Lloyd George.

But striking as was his personal triumph at Genoa, he himself felt no thrill of elation. He realised, with a bitterness of disappointment that, by reason of forces over which he had no control, the Conference had not fulfilled the predominant purpose of its existence. The Russia-Germany Treaty had, as he clearly discerned, fatally destroyed its chances of success. "Germany," he bewailed—in a retrospective reference to the occasion, "threw away a great opportunity at Genoa, when all the nations of Europe came together for the first time to discuss their troubles in a spirit of equality and amity. It is true," he added, "that reparations were excluded at the instance of France from the programme of the Conference; but the spirit engendered by a friendly settlement of all other outstanding questions would have rendered a reasonable and temperate consideration of Reparations inevitable. Germany, by the foolish staging of its Russian agreement, made all that impossible. Resentment and suspicion were once more equipped with a scourge, and they used it relentlessly to drive out

all good-will for Germany from the purlieus of that great Congress. Another opportunity lost," he moaned in words that might well be regarded as a fitting epitaph over the buried hopes of Genoa. Once more "Satan" had wrecked the carefully-laid plans of the British Premier for the comity of Europe, but the bitterness of the disappointment was aggravated by reason of the fact that the wrecker had, on this occasion, found his associates not in Paris, as had hitherto been the case, but among the very nations in whose interests the Genoa Conference had been specially contrived. Tchitcherin, the Bolshevik whom Lloyd George scornfully stigmatised as "a spirit of mischief incarnate" had not only played the game of Poincaré at a critical juncture but had played it with far more fatal results than the bourgeois French lawyer, with his obstinate obsession for the French occupation of German territory, could have even hoped to command.

The year which had thus brought Lloyd George such bitter disappointments over the Cannes and Genoa Conferences, became still darker for him with increased anxieties and with baffling complications. He had scarcely returned from Genoa before America formally presented a request for the repayment of the heavy loans which had been advanced to the Allied Governments. The Wilson Administration had advanced the money. The Harding Administration set itself to recover it and that at a time when such action was least expected. In his dilemma and in a genuine eagerness to relieve the financial burdens of the European nations, Lloyd George

suggested a general cancellation of debts, with a consequent reduction in reparations. To his disappointment so heroic a proposal evoked little response in Britain and none in America. Thus confronted by the stern necessity of meeting its liabilities, the British Government commissioned Lord Balfour to prepare a Note which, while making it explicit that, inasmuch as Britain was required to discharge her obligations to America, she was not in a position to forego the debts of the Allied nations to her, made it quite clear that she was prepared to restrict her claims to such amounts as would just enable her to cover her own indebtedness. The Note displayed, in the superlative degree, that subtlety of skill which had long marked its author as the greatest of dialecticians, for it was as implicit in its suggestiveness as it was explicit in its setting. It was manifestly intended to decoy the United States into a reconsideration of its earlier decision in regard to the question of Debt Settlements. But, notwithstanding the extreme fineness with which its meshes had been woven, in vain was the net set. As one of the most authoritative of American writers has recorded,[1] so far from producing the anticipated effect in the United States, the Balfour Note roused a resentment throughout the land. "It met official rejection. Popular indignation was immediate and universal. Those who had favoured cancellation were as angry as those who had insisted upon integral payment."

It was inevitable that the action of America in insisting on her claims should forthwith have its re-

[1] Mr. F. H. Simonds.

percussions in the various Allied countries. If Britain, under necessity of discharging her debt, felt justified in looking to France for the money, then France, with her impoverished exchequer, naturally felt that nothing remained to her but to look to Germany, if she was to be in a position to meet her liabilities. But already Germany was in default, and it was very evident that by her deliberate resort to the process of inflation she was resolutely bent upon evading her obligations.

The plight, into which Germany was thus deliberately rushing, made it incumbent upon the Allies again to take counsel together with the view to concerted action. To this end the French Premier journeyed to London for the purpose of conferring with Lloyd George and his colleagues. In face of the startling depreciation in the value of the German mark, which the process of inflation had already effected, Poincaré submitted drastic proposals for establishing Allied control over German finances, by way of encircling the Ruhr with a customs barrier and of taking temporary possession of the State mines and forests in the Ruhr. To these proposals Lloyd George offered a strenuous opposition, on the ground that the French Government was seeking to take an unfair advantage of Germany's extremity. The dialectical duel, in which neither of the combatants would give ground, continued day after day with the result that the Conference finally proved abortive. The French Premier returned to Paris in embittered mood and the estrangement between the two countries became still more aggravated.

However, while France and Britain were thus steadily drifting further and further apart, their divergences became suddenly overshadowed, in the early autumn in the year 1922, by the startling developments in the near East where the Turks and the Greeks were embroiled in deadly conflicts. For their attachment to Germany during the War, the Turks had paid the penalty in the loss of their European possessions and in their relegation to a strip of inland territory in Asia Minor. Constantinople was in the occupation of the Allies and the Sultan was in captivity. However, under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal Pasha, who had seized the reins of Government from the feeble hands of the captive Sultan, the Turkish regime had already begun to rear its head afresh even amid its own ruins. Although Greece had not taken her stand among the Allies in the grim stress of conflict, she had, by reason of the paramount influence of Venizelos, who had consistently espoused the cause of the Allies, profited greatly in the confiscation of Turkish territory, with the result that her sway had become extended to both sides of the Ægean Sea. Although her advance had thus been secured at the cost of the Turk, her rulers were by no means satisfied. They aspired after a still greater Greece and in their aspirations they had the support of the British Premier, in loyal devotion to Mr. Gladstone's memory and in an ingrained antipathy to Turkish rule. However, the more the British Government favoured Greece, the more did France instinctively take against her.

Taking advantage of this unconcealed cleavage be-

tween France and Britain, Kemal Pasha set himself to recover the lost prestige of his nation. He made overtures to both France and Italy and his advances were all the more welcome by reason of the return of King Constantine, who had been an avowed supporter of Germany, to the occupation of the Greek throne.

With the aid of war material which he had secured from both France and Italy, Kemal Pasha equipped his armies and marched against the Greek forces, bivouacked on Asiatic soil, which retreated in headlong flight.

Smyrna, which the Greeks had been holding at British instigation, fell and perished in flames. The Turkish Armies pressed forward until they arrived at the Straits, while their patrols reached even Chanak, on the southern side of the Bosphorus, where the British troops were already bivouacked in defence of Constantinople. Conscious of his strategic advantages, Kemal demanded the immediate evacuation of Constantinople and threatened to attack the small Allied garrisons which held the city, if the evacuation was not forthwith effected. In his alarm at so dangerous a situation, Lloyd George appealed to both the French and Italian Governments for support in resisting so arrogant a demand, and he even appealed to the Governments of the British Dominions to rally again to the side of the mother country in her hour of need. So far from responding to his appeal, the French and Italian Governments ordered their troops to leave the Asiatic shores, in order to ensure Kemal a free hand in his

military operations, while some of the British Dominions, already exhausted by the tremendous strain of the Great War, remained deaf to the appeal. In the circumstances nothing remained for the British Government but to undertake, on her own account, armed resistance to the Turkish demand, and Lloyd George made no secret of his resolve to hold out even though it involved an open out-break of hostilities. Consequently the British troops boldly faced the Turkish army in readiness for resistance, and British warships openly prepared to come into action. However, just when it seemed as though war was as inevitable as it was imminent, wiser counsels prevailed. In face of the incalculable but manifestly perilous reactions of such a conflict upon the millions of Mohammedan subjects in the British Empire, who were openly espousing the right of the Turk to the possession of Constantinople, it was recognised that resistance might well be undertaken at far too great a cost. As a result an armistice was, to Lloyd George's unconcealed chagrin, agreed upon and in the subsequent settlement Constantinople with all the surrounding territory of Thrace up to the Maritza River, was restored to the Turks.

XXXII

THE RETIREMENT OF LLOYD GEORGE —THE IRISH QUESTION

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ALTHOUGH the passing of the peril of war had naturally brought gratification to the British people, with their sated memories of war's grim and heavy toll, the settlement was nevertheless seen to be a grievous set-back to British prestige in the East. By reason of their alliance with France and Italy, the Turks had scored heavily, while the Greeks had suffered as the result of the inadequacy of British support. The moral was so self-evident that its significance could not be missed in the European cock-pit. Equally disconcerting was the situation at home. A general depression in trade had set in and as a result British industries were suffering acutely from its effects. From one end of the country to the other unemployment was on the increase and the note of discontent was being heard on every hand. The confident anticipations of national prosperity so manifestly engendered by the triumph of the Allied Armies in the War and by the consequent collapse of Germany, which had long been Britain's most formidable rival in industrial enterprises, so far from materialising, had become perceptibly blighted by the course of events. Although a period of four

years had elapsed since the end of the War, there was little sign and still less hope for any reparations from the vanquished foe. The heavy loans, which had been made to the Allies, still remained unliquidated. Britain alone was meeting her liabilities—out of an exchequer which was being replenished solely by means of an unrelieved incidence of heavy taxes on her own people. The constant itineraries of the Prime Minister, as he peregrinated from one European Conference to another, had brought no gain. Not only had Germany become obdurate, but France had become alienated, Italy had become perceptibly chilled in her traditional friendliness to Britain, while America had, as the result of the Balfour Note, been angered to a point of open resentment. In the circumstances it was not surprising that a sense of grievous disappointment should permeate the great mass of the British people, and that the disappointment should develop into a sense of disillusionment. The stupendous sacrifices involved in four years' war were seen to be still unrequited after four years' peace.

Unquestionably the insecurity of Lloyd George's position amid this increasing discontent, was seriously aggravated by his persistent neglect of Parliament. Acutely conscious of the fact that the vital issues of the Peace would necessarily be determined in the councils of the Allies, and secure in the possession of the largest Parliamentary following which any British Premier had ever secured, he had relegated the leadership of the House of Commons to a substitute and had contented himself by favouring the

assembly with occasional visits when he desired its vantage ground for the purposes of public utterances. As a result he had lost the advantage of close and vital touch with its Members, the great bulk of whom had been elected on the glamour of his name.

After the fashion of the winter snows, which have been steadily accumulating on an Alpine ridge, all that was necessary to precipitate a devastating avalanche was just a decisive word as should suffice to make the atmosphere vibratory with its reverberations. In the month of October, when the stability of the British Government was perceptibly weakening and when the political atmosphere was fraught with peril, there came from an unexpected quarter the fatal word which precipitated the avalanche that swept Lloyd George and his Government out of office. Some months before, his chief colleague, Bonar Law, had been compelled to relinquish, on account of ill-health, his position in the Government. To his advantageous position, as the official leader of the Conservative Party, he had brought the qualities of sagacity and soundness of judgment which had made him an invaluable colleague to Lloyd George. In his rôle as the leader of the House of Commons, he had displayed the most consummate skill. He had made smooth the rough path of legislation and had thus relieved the Prime Minister of exacting duties and of arduous responsibilities. With the sudden break in so successful a partnership, which a medical decree had made absolute, it was feared that the Prime Minister would find it impossible to replace so indispensable a colleague. However, no

man is indispensable, however much he may seem so. Consequently Bonar Law had no sooner retired from his position as the Premier's chief confidant, than his successor was appointed and matters continued their normal course. Highly sensitive of nature, the disabled statesman felt aggrieved in thus finding himself so soon forgotten by the leader to whom he had rendered such a full measure of personal loyalty and zealous service. When, therefore, in the month of October, the malcontents among the Conservative Members convened a special meeting at the Carlton Club in London for the purpose of forcing the rupture of the Coalition which bound the Conservative Party to Lloyd George's Government, Bonar Law suddenly emerged from the shadow of his retirement, and openly associating himself with the demands of the Revolters, secured their immediate triumph. Before the close of the day, the Conservative members of the Cabinet had withdrawn and Lloyd George had been left with no course other than to tender his resignation to the King. The following day found Bonar Law in the Premiership and a Conservative Government in office.

And thus ended Lloyd George's long tenure of office which had extended over an unbroken period of sixteen years, six of which had been spent in the occupation of the supreme place of the Premiership. He fell from power at a time when France was resolutely and even defiantly setting her course in the direction of the Ruhr Valley, in pursuance of a policy which Lloyd George had persistently opposed and which, in consequence of his fall from office, he be-

MR. LLOYD GEORGE AND MR. DE VALERA IN CONFERENCE AT 10 DOWNING STREET

came powerless to prevent. In the circumstances his deposition from power could not but have given the French Premier satisfaction even to the point of gratification. It meant the removal of the most resolute and the most redoubtable opponent of the policy on which he had set his heart and which he was resolved, at all costs, to follow. Still, although Lloyd George left office, with the saddening consciousness that the high hopes of the establishment of European peace on a sure foundation, which he had ardently cherished and in the materialisation of which he had confidently counted on taking a prominent and decisive part, showed no sign of implementation, he had the satisfaction of knowing that his tenure of power had by no means been barren; for, in his settlement of the Irish question, he had been able to secure a satisfactory solution of a problem which, for well-nigh a century, had embittered the relationship of the two islands and had stubbornly defied the wit and the genius of the greatest of British statesmen—of Pitt and Peel, of Russell and Palmerston, of Disraeli and Gladstone, of Balfour and Asquith. The task had proved Sisyphean in its attempted execution. Every attempt had proved abortive and with every failure the task had become more formidable.

Early in the year 1917, just after the United States had come into the war, Mr. Walter Page, the American Ambassador in London, despatched a letter to President Wilson in which he recorded that, at the close of a dinner party, at which he had entertained Lloyd George, he had taken the British Premier into

a corner of the drawing-room and had delivered him the President's message regarding the need and the urgency of a satisfactory settlement of the Irish question. "God knows," Lloyd George had fervidly ejaculated in reply, "I am trying to settle it. Tell the President that. But the President is right. We've got to settle it and we've got to settle it now."

But the task proved infinitely harder than even he had realised. With a Government which was predominantly composed of Conservative leaders whose energies had been spent in a persistent and passionate opposition to the Irish demand for the right of self-government, he found himself frustrated in every effort to respond to President Wilson's appeal. But notwithstanding the unrelenting attitude of his colleagues and the aggravation of the obstacles in his path in consequence of the organised resort by the Irish Sinn Feiners to the most violent deeds of crime and bloodshed, he never lost heart, and he never relaxed his efforts for a settlement which should be acceptable to both countries. He pursued his purpose with a patience that knew no respite and with a vigilance that missed not even the semblance of an opportunity. Towards the close of the year 1921, when violence was everywhere in the ascendancy in Ireland and when her soil was being heavily drenched with blood, he resolved upon a course which literally astounded his colleagues with its amazing audacity. He decided to invite the Sinn Fein leaders, who were already being hunted from place to place by police and soldiers, to come to Downing Street to confer with him and certain of his Cabinet colleagues

with the view to a mutually satisfactory settlement. The bold suggestion instantly materialised, with the result that on a December night, five of the Sinn Fein leaders assembled with four representatives of the British Cabinet at the Premier's official residence in 10, Downing Street.

The Conference took place, as Lloyd George subsequently recalled in graphic narrative of the occasion, in the famous room wherein British Cabinets had for generations forged their British policies. "Coercion and concession alike issued from that chamber. Pitt's Act of Union was discussed there, and so were Gladstone's Home Rule Bills; the decision to use British soldiers to throw Irish tenants out of their houses with battering ram and torch, and equally the Bill which made every Irish tenant lord and master of his home at the expense of the British Treasury—all issued forth from this simple and unadorned council chamber. And now came the final treaty of peace. Would it be signed? It was an anxious moment charged with destiny for the two great races who confronted each other at that green table. Would the Irish leaders have the courage to make peace on the only conditions under which peace was attainable—liberty within the Empire? Opposite me sat a dark, short, but sturdy figure, with the face of a thinker. That was Mr. Arthur Griffith, the most un-Irish leader that ever led Ireland, quiet to the point of gentleness, reserved almost to the point of appearing saturnic. A man of laconic utterance, he answered in monosyllables where most men would have considered an oratorical

deliverance to be demanded by the dignity of the occasion. He was asked whether he would sign. In his abrupt, staccato manner he replied, 'Speaking on my own behalf, I mean to sign.' By his side sat a handsome young Irishman. That was Michael Collins, one of the most courageous leaders ever produced by a valiant race. Nevertheless he hesitated painfully when the quiet and gentle little figure on his left had taken his resolve. Both saw the shadow of doom clouding over that fateful paper—their own doom. They knew that the pen which affixed their signature at the same moment signed their death-warrant. The little man saw beyond his own fall Ireland rising out of her troubles a free nation and that sufficed for him. Michael Collins was not appalled by the spectre of death, but he had the Irishman's fear of encounting that charge which comes so readily to the lips of the oppressed—that of having succumbed to alien wile and betrayed their country. I knew the reason why he halted, although he never uttered a word which revealed his mind, and I addressed my appeal to an effort to demonstrate how the treaty gave Ireland more than Daniel O'Connell and Parnell had ever hoped for, and how his countrymen would be ever grateful to him not only for the courage which won such an offer, but for the wisdom that accepted it. He asked for a few hours to consider, promising a reply by nine o'clock. Nine passed, but the Irish leaders did not return. Ten, eleven, and they were not yet back. We had doubts as to whether we should see them again. Then came a message that they were on their

way to Downing Street. When they marched in, it was clear from their faces that they had come to a great decision — after a prolonged struggle. But there were still difficulties to overcome. They were, however, principles not of principle but of detail. These were discussed in a businesslike way and soon after one o'clock in the morning, the Treaty was complete."[1]

Well might Lloyd George, as he recalled the stirring memory of so historic an occasion, give vent to his deep sense of pride in having had a hand "in erecting the pillar which will for ever mark the boundary between the squalor of the past and the hope of the future."

According to Mr. Winston Churchill, who was closely associated with him in the accomplishment of so unique an achievement, the event proved fatal to Lloyd George, for within a year he had been driven from power. "Yet," adds Mr. Churchill in the fervour of a tribute, which is as just as it is generous, "in so far as Mr. Lloyd George can link his political misfortunes with this Irish story, he may be content. In falling through Irish difficulties, he may fall with Essex and with Strafford, with Pitt and with Gladstone, and with a line of sovereigns and statesmen, great or small, across the English history books of seven hundred years. But Lloyd George falls with this weighty difference: that, whereas all these others, however great their efforts and sacrifices, left behind them only a problem, he has achieved—must we not hope it?—a solution."[2]

[1] Mr. Lloyd George, in "Is It Peace?"

[2] In "The Aftermath."

When towards the close of the year 1920, Lloyd George learnt of the overthrow of Venizelos at the Greek elections, he was heard to murmur: "Now I am the only one left." Wilson had already vacated his high office, Clemenceau had gone into retirement and Orlando had been deposed from his Premiership. The British Premier was the sole survivor of the group of Allied statesmen, on whose shoulders the burden of a world-wide responsibility had rested and to whose hands the destinies of the peoples of the earth had been entrusted. And now at last he, too, had been overtaken by the vicissitudes to which his earlier associates had succumbed.

With his departure from office, there appeared, in a leading journal, a cynical cartoon in which Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson were depicted greeting him, within the cold shadows of an enforced retirement, with the words: "We have been waiting for you for three years." The manner of his exit gave point to the gibe. The last of the "Big Four" had fallen just as they had.

Still his mortification was tempered in no small degree by the significant fact that his was the distinction of having held office for a longer period than any living statesman in any land. He had had an unbroken tenure for seventeen years, six of which had been spent in the Premiership of his country. During those six years he had exercised an authority unequalled, either in its range or in its dominance, by any of his predecessors.

XXXIII

THE POLITICAL CAREER OF LLOYD GEORGE

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LLOYD GEORGE'S romantic triumph has been frequently likened to that of Disraeli. The two careers are manifestly similar in certain of their salient features. The one a Jew and the other a Welshman, both of them had from the outset to combat racial prejudice of the most inveterate kind. Moreover, unlike their predecessors in the British Premiership neither of them had had the advantage of a University training. On the contrary both of them were self-taught and had had to rely on their own native resources in the pursuit of the most cherished of their ambitions. Each of them had manifestly been sustained in the face of many discouragements by an intuitive faith in his destiny and, in the inspiration of such an intuition, had not hesitated to hazard his future even to the point of openly flouting the authority of his leader on the floor of the House of Commons. And in due time the one, as the other, had succeeded, by sheer force of his own natural gifts, to the chief place in the service of the Crown.

Still, similar as their careers thus were, they were nevertheless marked also by some striking differences, for Disraeli enjoyed from the outset certain advantages which were denied Lloyd George, for even be-

fore he had entered Parliament, he had made for himself a considerable literary reputation. He had written a book which had instantly become the topic of talk in every London drawing-room. When he stood as a Parliamentary candidate for a Buckinghamshire constituency, his candidature was strongly commended by such well-known politicians as Joseph Hume, and Daniel O'Connell, while the Duke of Buckingham had openly favoured him. Moreover he had won the friendship of Lord Lyndhurst, the Lord Chancellor, and had enlisted the interest of Lord Selbourne who was at that time the Home Secretary. "They'll have to find a seat in Parliament for this young man," declared the Duke of Wellington on the appearance of Disraeli's brilliant book entitled "The Vindication of the English Constitution," and Sir Robert Peel had written him in congratulation on his achievement. On the strength of such auspices, his father, with an unconcealed gratification, had felt justified in assuring him that he had "now a positive name, being in the great political world." When therefore young Disraeli entered Parliament in 1837, his fame had already preceded him and his advent was openly regarded on both sides of the House as that of "a rising man."

No such adventitious advantages attended the appearance of the young Welsh lawyer when he took his seat at Westminster, for, previous to his election, none of the leaders of his own Party had even known his name. He came as an unknown youth, and unlike Disraeli, he owed nothing to the influence of

the great. As he wistfully recalled on the memorable day of his appointment to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, in a retrospective survey of the way by which he had attained so great a distinction, he had never known a hand being held out to him from above or a voice calling out to him "climb up here," but, as he quickly added, "there had been thousands of hands which had pushed him up from behind." Well was it said. It was the hands of the Welsh peasantry—hard and rough with toil—that had, in his first election, pushed him from the obscurity of his narrow sphere in the remote West into the spacious scope of the senate chamber at Westminster, in an intuitive belief that it was there that his appointed destiny lay.

Still, even the force of their eager hands would not have sufficed had there not been inherent in the young lawyer an all-consuming passion for "getting to the top" and a doggedness of purpose which stubbornly refused to be thwarted in the pursuit of its objective by the many formidable obstacles that lay in the way. When he was a mere child he would frequently exclaim to his uncle as he pointed to the largest tree in the garden: "I am going to be a giant, like that tree." The sense of destiny breathed in him from his earliest years, and the eagerness for the big things in life grew upon him with every fresh opportunity. In after years he recalled how, on the day on which came the news of his first triumph in his success at the Law Preliminary Examination, he had solemnly stood on the stone slab in the garden of the little homestead at Llanystundwy and,

looking up to Heaven, had vowed that he would be "something great" in life.

From the outset he seems to have realised that it was in Parliament that his embryonic gifts were destined to come into fruition. The passion for politics was in his blood. While still a lad at school, he used to read with an all-consuming avidity the newspaper reports of Parliamentary debates; and, as has already been pointed out, the earliest effusions of his pen in print dealt exclusively with political topics, while on the occasion of his first visit to London, he had made straight for the House of Commons. When, therefore, a few years later he took his seat as a duly elected Member of Parliament, it was with an acute presentiment that by the help of the hands of the humble folk he had attained to the sphere which the finger of destiny had marked out for him.

Where, it is frequently asked, lies the secret of his subsequent triumphs? Unquestionably many factors have contributed to his success. In the first place, he is an orator of the highest order in the hierarchy of speech—one who has been richly endowed with that inborn but subtle gift for thrilling vast audiences which has placed him on a level with Gladstone and with Bright. He possesses all the distinguishing characteristics of a great orator—a voice that can sweep, in its range of intonation and inflection, the whole gamut of human emotion, and a fervour that can rouse vast masses to a state of delirious enthusiasm. Flashing wit, a genial humour, tender pathos, effective raillery, scaring invective, scorn-

ful satire and effective repartee, dramatic power and an irresistible power of popular appeal—they have all been found in his armoury in ready command to meet the demands of every emergency.

To this supreme gift of a natural and thrilling eloquence he has added an aptitude for striking simile which has proved as inexhaustible in its use as it has been damaging in its range. He invariably speaks in parables to the multitude. He has an unrivalled genius for converting abstract ideas into the concreteness of illustrations which instantly affect the imagination. As has been truly said, it is this picture-making faculty that distinguishes him from the most eminent of public speakers. Others have it in some degree but in no one else is it so essential to the expression of his mind. He knows that it is not by an elaborate process of argument that the masses are moved but rather by word pictures which instantly arrest the attention and linger in the memory, and for that reason he indulges freely in illustrations taken from the daily life and lot of his hearers. They serve the same purpose in his speeches as do spacious windows in a dwelling house. They let in the light.

To his inborn skill in thrilling vast audiences, he has added a dialectic resource and an agility in attack which made him the most formidable rival to the late Joseph Chamberlain who had won just renown as the greatest debater that the British Parliament had ever known.

Still, outstanding as are his gifts as both orator and debater, they do not suffice to account for the

commanding and even unique place which he has won for himself in the political arena. One must look for further contributory causes in explanation of his remarkable career. Though it is true that he was not "the first cottage-bred man" who had found his way to Parliament, it is none the less true that he was the first of the order who succeeded in the task of making the atmosphere of the lowly cottage a vitalising force in British politics. He had seen life, as he claimed on one occasion, from "the inner side of a cottage window." He knew, from the fulness of his own personal experience, how dark were the hearths of the poor with the grim shadows of want and how heavy were the burdens of their anxieties. For that reason he entered upon his Parliamentary duties in stern resolve to strive for the amelioration in their daily lot and condition. He was taunted with being "a Liberal only in his prejudices and not at all in his philosophy." The taunt was not without its force for he had manifestly little sympathy with the Liberalism which sought, as its main objective, the mere abolition of barriers of social or political caste which debarred any section of the community from equality of opportunity at the hands of the State. He recked little for the removal of political disabilities if the fresh increment of personal freedom brought its possessor no improvement in his daily lot. The statistical array of official returns in demonstration of the country's prosperity left him unmoved in face of the fact that, while the princes of commerce were waxing richer, the hard lot of the needy and the destitute remained

unchanged. For that reason his appearance in Parliament was that of a portent. From the outset he showed himself eager to pour new wine into an old bottle—to infuse into the treasured traditions of Liberalism, which had been associated with the names of Cobden, and of Bright and of Gladstone a new purpose in an increased responsibility on the part of the State for the material and social welfare of the dim millions who live by the sweat of their brow.

For him politics became, in their vital inculcations, a matter of economics—something that had insistent relevance to the daily circumstances of the common people. With his subsequent accession to the prestige and authority of office, he proceeded forthwith to draw upon the resources of the State in the realisation of his cherished purpose. His Health Insurance Bill, whereby the State became directly charged with the responsibility of making provision against sickness among the great body of manual workers—a statutory obligation which was unprecedented in the annals of British legislation—was begotten of the memories of his own early life when he was accustomed, week by week, to take his uncle's shilling to the local friendly society in provision for the time of need only to find when that time came that there was nothing for the provident shoemaker as the society had failed. His legislative measures were thus minted of his early memories. They were perceptibly coloured by his own personal experiences on the hearth of the little cottage in the shadow of the Welsh hills.

When he introduced his first Budget—in the years

before the peace of Europe became broken, he proudly described it as "a War Budget"—framed for the purpose of "raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness," and in the throes of the controversy which his far-reaching proposals had provoked, he claimed that it was calculated to bring "something within the reach of the people that will give warmth and glow to their grey lives, something that will help to dispel the hunger, the despair, the oppression and the wrong which now chill so many of their hearths." The "cottage-bred man" openly revelled in the rôle of the Apostle of the Proletariat—the prophet of a new social order. The romance of his career is not without its paradox for, though a democrat in sympathy, he is an autocrat by temperament, as the War very clearly demonstrated. In this respect, also, he may be said to bear a striking resemblance to Abraham Lincoln of whom it is recorded that, on a critical occasion during the Civil War, he summoned his Cabinet, which contained some exceptionally able men, and sought their opinion in regard to the measures that should be adopted to meet the gravity of the situation. It soon transpired that they were unanimously in favour of a particular course, whereupon Lincoln took the unusual course of calling for a Division. When they had all voted "Ayes," he contented himself with the emphatic remark as he placed his hand upon his chest: "The Noes have it."

It is no secret that Lloyd George exercised the same autocratic authority over the members of his Cabinet. Though ready to listen to their views, he

invariably imposed his will upon them and made them his pliable instruments in the execution of his plans. And so all-dominating was his authority that they fulfilled his behests with the utmost docility. When, for example, he was taking a brief respite in the North of Scotland, he convened a meeting of the Cabinet in the town of Inverness, with the result that his colleagues found themselves constrained to leave the administration of their Departments in order to make the long journey to the North in a ready and unquestioning obedience to his command. Indeed, he even invested his Secretariat—composed of a group of men who were outside Parliament—with powers which Cabinet Ministers could not command, with the result that during the Paris Conference the representatives of the various countries learned to attach far more importance to the views and comments of any of his secretaries than even to those of Cabinet Ministers. He assumed the determining control of the foreign policy of his Ministry with the result that the British Minister for Foreign Affairs,[1] who had, in past years, ruled India with an iron hand, had to be content with the inglorious rôle of "an Imperial butler" and the Foreign Office was reduced to the perfunctory duties of a mere registry of international documents and treaties.

Among the greatest of Lloyd George's assets is his gift of imaginative insight which has enabled him instinctively to sense a situation and to discuss its strategic elements. It is this gift that made him so

[1] The late Marquess Curzon of Kedleston.

skilful a negotiator in industrial disputes and enabled him to achieve success where others would inevitably have failed. With the sympathetic appreciation of the attitude of the two sides, he has known exactly where and how the desired rapprochement could be established. But never has he exercised this characteristic gift of intuitive perception to greater advantage than he did during the Peace Conference where, as one of the closest observers[1] of his methods has testified, he displayed "an unerring, almost medium-like sensibility to everyone immediately around him—watching the company, with six or seven senses not available to ordinary men, judging character, motive, and sub-conscious impulse, forecasting what each was thinking and even what each was going to say next, and compounding with telepathic instinct the argument or appeal best suited to the vanity, weakness or self-interest of his immediate auditor." It would, however, be idle to deny that he has the defect of this priceless quality, for, as has been truly observed,[2] he is persistently prone to "live by inspiration, act on intuition and rely on improvisations," with the result that he came to be regarded in Paris as a sublime opportunist who was always ready to take advantage of any turn in the situation.

A master of mass psychology, as he has proved himself to be, with an intuitive insight into the moods of the masses and an unerring divination of the things

[1] Mr. J. M. Keynes, in "The Economic Consequences of the Peace."

[2] Mr. F. H. Simonds.

that stir their deepest feelings, it must be confessed that his judgment has often been gravely at fault in judging individuals.

After the manner of the Stuart Kings, he showed himself, in the great days of his unchallenged power, much too prone to seek his favourites in second and even third-rate men and, in the exercise of his authority, to instal them in the front places. And so it came about that on his chess-board the pawns took rank above the knights and the bishops with the result that, when they failed him in his expectations—as it was inevitable that they would—he cast them aside in the most ruthless fashion. Hence the force of the declaration by one who has made a most careful study of his psychology,[1] "he is a good friend while it lasts, but death alone can secure his lasting praise." It must further be admitted that there is some truth in the taunt which was levelled at him by one of the most loyal of his former colleagues, when writhing under his invective, that he would rather placate an enemy than please a friend. The explanation is obvious. In the pursuit of his purposes the attachment of a foe may sometimes prove to be of much greater value than the loyalty of a friend and on the principle that the end justifies the means—a principle which he has invariably observed—he has never hesitated to gain the one even at the expense of the other. And therein lies the reason why his path has been littered with the fragments of broken friendships and of ruptured allegiances.

[1] Lord Beaverbrook.

Mr. Walter Page, who during the period of his Ambassadorship was brought into close and constant contact with Lloyd George, described him as "one of the most energetic projectiles" that he had ever met. "He is changeable and mercurial," added Page, "for he reaches quick conclusions by his emotions as well as by his reason." This emotional sensibility which is so conspicuous a characteristic in his temperamental equipment has invariably stirred the scorn of his foes and the unconcealed perplexity of his friends. He is not only responsive but highly sensitive to his surroundings. After the manner of a highly sensitised plate, he is affected by every change in the atmosphere. Indeed so sensitive is he to the influence of public opinion—so plastic to the touch of the prevailing circumstance—that he has been likened to "a captain of a cricket team who disposed his fieldsmen or changed his bowlers according to advice shouted by the crowd." Still, this bewildering variation of mood, which is so conspicuously characteristic of him, is as valuable a factor in his accoutrement as is his versatility. For it arises from no uncontrollable waywardness of spirit or of purpose. On the contrary, it makes that spontaneous response to every vital change of circumstance which is the pre-eminent characteristic of the Celtic temperament. In Lloyd George's case, however, this Celtic quality of a ready adaptability to changing circumstances is rigidly subordinated to the most careful calculation of the possibilities of the situation before he embarks upon a hazardous exploit. Even when he quickens public interest

to fever heat by what appears to be a rash and even a risky exploit on the edge of the precipice, he knows exactly how far it is safe to go; for he has already ascertained, after a careful survey, the depth of the declivity and consequently the exact nature and the precise measurement of the risk involved.

In illustration of the truth of this observation, it will suffice to refer to his memorable speech at Limehouse when the controversy over his first Budget was being waged with the utmost fierceness. Of all Lloyd George's speeches, there has not been one which has ever roused such unrestrained resentment or stirred such bitter antipathy to him. It was denounced by his political opponents as the worst form of demagogic appeal to the passions of the mob. It was even stigmatised as an unexampled instance of bad taste and an irrefutable proof of bad breeding. Even his own leader was known to deplore the speech as a grave blunder in tactics for, so far from easing the way of the Budget to the statute book, it had served only to block its path and even to involve its certain destruction. But that was exactly what he had deliberately set himself to do. Mindful of the occasions on which the peers had, at the instigation of the instinct of self-preservation, bowed their heads to the storm of public protest, when they had threatened to reject Liberal measures, rather than risk the loss of their treasured prerogative in the exercise of their all-determining veto, he was determined that so strategic an opportunity for encompassing

their defeat should not again be lost in a providential surrender. He had dug a pit for them and he was resolved to lure them into it. It was for that reason that he delivered the Limehouse speech with its unrestrained imprecations and its strident note of defiance, in a confident anticipation that by such means he would succeed in his set purpose of provoking them to such a state of uncontrollable exasperation that they would become absolutely blind to the perils of the situation. His device succeeded in its purpose. The Lords flung out the Budget with the result that the consideration of either its merits or its demerits became lost in the momentous struggle which finally ended in the abolition of the long-cherished veto of the Upper House. The Limehouse speech may thus be cited as a striking example of that "careful calculation of existing resources—cold caution at one moment and stark courage at the next" which has been rightly singled out by an astute observer[1] as one of the most striking of Lloyd George's characteristics. The "stark courage" which he has so often displayed throughout his career, even to the point of apparently jeopardising his future, has invariably been begotten of "the cold caution" which has led him to mark the lie of the land before he has taken his adventurous leap.

A well informed author[2] has recorded that on the occasion of a visit to Spain, a few years ago, he met one of the leading Ministers of State who showed an extremely keen interest in everything regard-

[1] Lord Beaverbrook.
[2] "The Path of Peace."

ing Lloyd George. He wanted to know his age: whether the pictures one saw of him in the newspapers looked like him, what he was like in ordinary conversation; but, above all, he wanted to know what was likely to be his political future. To most of such enquiries it would be easy to furnish the desired information. His physical appearance has struck various observers in various ways. One has described him as possessing a head unusually large, with bowed shoulders and deep chest which admirably match his noble head while "below the waist he appears to dwindle away, his legs seeming to bend under the weight of his body, so that he waddles rather than walks, moving with a rolling gait which is rather like a seaman's; another has been impressed by his wonderful eyes:—sometimes as devoid of emotional quality as optical lenses, at other times kindling with the wrath of an honestly indignant man and again revealing a tenderness which explains why their owner, in some critical moments in his own history and the country's, has gained his point with solid and stolid business men solely by an appeal to sentiment; while Lord Beaverbrook has, with a vivid touch, delineated him as "a combination of enormous physical ability joined to a mentality so voracious of appetite and so sensitive to atmosphere as to attain to greatness by the very variety and immensity of its attributes," with a physique "so constituted that sleep comes at will at any hour of the day."

With regard to his ordinary conversation, it will suffice to say that it is invariably at its best when

he is surrounded by a number of guests who, in the unconcealed ardour of their devotion to him, are manifestly eager to accord him the listening ear. On such occasions he delights to recall the memories of famous Welsh preachers whom he proudly claims to be the greatest of the world's orators, and even to reproduce, with an astonishing mimicry of voice and of tone, some striking passages from their sermons. He is passionately fond of Welsh hymns and, in illustration of the haunting melody of their tunes, he will render them for the benefit of his guests even though they cannot understand the words. But the dominating topic in his conversation invariably hinges on the latest turn in the political kaleidoscope. He will indulge in political gossip and he will cleverly "hit off" the characteristics of leading politicians in a phrase or with a gibe, but his chief interest is concentrated on the needs and on the prospects of his own Party. These are never absent from his thoughts or from his talk.

One of the American delegates at the Peace Conference has testified that during his sojourn in Paris, while the destinies of European nations were being re-shaped, Lloyd George never for a moment took his hand from the political pulse at home. Politics and all that they connote in the way of party warfare, conflicting issues and rival programmes—these are the things that absorb his attention and colour his conversations. Apart from politics he has no abiding interest. For him literature is attractive only so far as it supplies him with some material for his speeches; while even his little farm at Churt,

whither he delights to hasten from the turmoil of the political arena, finds its chief charm for him as a lodge of instruction with its facilities for ocular demonstration in the cultivation of the soil—for his equipment in the leadership of the campaign for a drastic scheme of land reform.

Easy, as it thus is, to afford much of the information which the Spanish statesman so ardently desired, it must be confessed that even the lapse of years has in no way simplified the problem of Lloyd George's political future which seems to have intrigued the Spaniard's Minister. It is still an unsolved riddle in political circles. Divers speculations have been indulged in, but the note of interrogation continues to cast its challenging shadow over all of them.

It is interesting to recall that, on the occasion of Lloyd George's triumphant return from the Paris Conference, when he was welcomed by the King and by the populace, one of the most discerning of British editors[1] summarised the potentialities of his future within the limits of a brief paragraph: "On conditions," he declared, "Mr. Lloyd George may be even greater in peace than he was in war. If he takes the right course, he may be for years the greatest man in the world. Above all he must begin to settle in his own mind the epoch-making question whether he means on the whole to move to the Left or to the Right."

It is unquestionable that, during the period of his Premiership, when he was dependent upon the Conservative majority in the House of Commons

[1]Mr. J. L. Garvin, in the *Observer*.

and when the Conservative leaders were rendering him an unstinted fealty, he was strongly inclined to go definitely and permanently to the Right. It is an open secret that he even discussed with Bonar Law the feasibility of creating a new Party, composed of the moderate elements on both the Conservative and Liberal camps on the basis of a policy which combined an ardent advocacy of social reform in domestic politics with a fervid devotion to the far-flung interests of the Empire. He was deterred from proceeding to the realisation of such a project, partly by the reluctance of certain of his own Liberal colleagues to abandon a Party label which had become invested with historic memories, but mainly by Bonar Law's retirement, by reason of ill-health, from the government at the time when the mooted scheme was approaching the stage of practical consideration. However, with Bonar Law's departure from the arena, the feeling of partnership which had linked the two sections in the Coalition in a common purpose steadily waned and the sense of their fundamental differences became more and more pronounced, with the result that the fissures in the structure continued to increase until finally they widened out into the rupture that brought the Georgian Ministry crashing to the ground. With the fall of his Ministry and the return of Bonar Law to the arena as his successor in the Premiership, Lloyd George was quick to discover that both the need and the opportunity of going to the Right had passed away. For a time he was content to stand at the crossways, patiently possessing his soul while

he waited upon the latent possibilities of the situation as they slowly emerged. In recent years, however, he has steadily moved to the Left on the ground that, as he himself has expressed it, his "natural drift" is to the Left. Therein lies the explanation of his attitude towards the General Strike in the year 1926 when he openly dissociated himself from his Liberal colleagues in their denunciation of the Strike as a reprehensible attempt to undermine the stability of the State. His attitude on that occasion, which resulted in a final severance of personal relationship between Lord Oxford and himself, was manifestly devised as a convincing proof of his readiness to "go Left."

But the question still persists with an unabating force and relevancy—what is his future likely to be? Is he destined to become as dominating a figure on the Left as he was, at one time, on the Right? Will he succeed in establishing as potent and effective an alliance with the Labour Party as he did during the period of his Premiership? These are the questions that are being eagerly asked—in clear discernment that in their correct solution will be found the trend of British politics in these coming years. It is obviously certain that he will not be content, as was the famous Duke of Wellington after his retirement from the Premiership, with the laurels of his past and with the silent salutations of the populace in homage to their glamour. As Walter Page so justly observed of him: "He is too heavily charged with electricity to stop activity." The passion for power is in his blood; and while his

blood courses through his veins, he will never cease to strive for the coveted mastery. It needs therefore no prophetic faculty to predict that if his Party cannot, of its own resources, achieve to the place of power, he will not hesitate to contract an alliance with one of the other Parties for as has been truly observed by a German writer[1] with a shrewd discernment of his predominant characteristics, "he cares nothing for Parties, except in so far as they can be of use to him. It is a matter of indifference to him what the Party is called to which he belongs, he only wants a majority, or sufficient following to enable him to carry out his own ideas. . . . He knows no Party but himself, no policy but his own, compromises only with himself and is his own Coalition." However, in a steady survey of his romantic career, with its triumphant ascent from the humblest of origins to the most commanding place at the most critical period in the world's history, it becomes clear that "the epoch-making question," as regards his future destiny, is not whether he will finally go to the Right or to the Left, but rather whether he will again turn to the source of his pristine power for a renewal of its inspiration. It is said[2] that, on one occasion when he was attending the memorial service of an eminent statesman at Westminster Cathedral, one of his colleagues assured him that, when he died, he would be given a like tribute. "No," was his instant and emphatic reply, "for when I die, you will lay me in the shadow

[1] Rudolph Kirscher in "Powers and Pillars."
[2] A. G. Gardiner in "Pillars of Society."

of my native mountains." The observation was as suggestive as it was apt. It was under the shadow of the Welsh hills, amid a peasantry that drew its strength—material and moral—from a simplicity of fare and of faith, that set conscience above comfort and the sovereignty of the soul above the pomp of power, that he learnt his first lessons and found those potent ideals that so manifestly sustained him in his early struggles. The classical legend of Antaeus, the wrestler who was invincible as long as he maintained contact with his mother earth, has surely its counterpart in Lloyd George's career, for never is his touch so sure or his grip of men's hearts so all-compelling as when he turns aside from the machinations and the manœuvrings of the political arena to lift up his eyes to his native hills and to draw his strength from the simple and cherished land of his fathers.

But while they be many who are still speculating over his future, let it suffice for the rest of us to acknowledge, with just admiration, the greatness of the tasks which he has already accomplished. The noble eulogy which Lord Rosebery has pronounced on the career of the younger Pitt can with a striking appositeness of circumstance and of achievement, be fittingly applied to Lloyd George: "He ruled during the convulsion of a new birth at the greatest epoch in history since the coming of Christ and was on the whole not unequal to it."

Already the name of David Lloyd George has become woven into the warp and woof of the world's history. "The cottage-bred man" has become one of the master figures of the modern world.

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